As a young worker whose first summer job was at the age of 15, I have had a few unsafe working experiences. At a fast food restaurant, I slipped on a greasy, cluttered floor and hit my head on one of the pieces of equipment used in the kitchen. At a later summer waitressing job, one of my duties was to slice tomatoes. I used a machine with a blade attached that I was not trained for, and there was no supervision provided. That experience resulted in a severely cut finger and nerve damage. These two preventable incidents should have been taken more seriously by myself and by my employers.

But when students consider summer jobs, their primary concern is usually money. They are excited to be earning and tend to overlook the importance of health and safety. According to the Government of Alberta, every year about 7600 young workers ages 15 to 24 suffer on-the-job injuries. And on average about five young workers a year die in workplace incidents. The Industrial Accident Prevention Association of Ontario found that over 50 per cent of young workers say they did not receive any training before starting a new task.

Young workers can be skeptical and think that unsafe conditions or injuries won’t happen to them. Health and safety in the workplace did not cross my mind when I first entered the workforce. It took hitting my head and slicing my finger to shift my focus. Cleanliness, inadequate training, working with hazardous equipment or materials, and working with little to no supervision are all issues that can result in injury or sickness to a young worker.

Thinking about my past jobs, I realized that students are not the only ones who overlook health and safety. Because summer jobs are temporary, managers may want to save time by not giving proper instructions or training. If I am not comfortable in a workplace or don’t think that my safety is a priority for my managers, I will say something or ask questions. In the past, I learned to inquire about training and workplace conditions, and doing so helped me feel safer and more confident about my job. Asking about the more dangerous aspects of duties and the training to handle them can make for a better working experience.

As a 22-year-old student, I have a long life ahead of me. If I am hurt and am unable to work, it will affect my future. Not only will I be unable to pay for my expenses, I will not be able to accomplish my goals and finish school. Looking out for my future is my number one priority, and workplace health and safety is a great place to start.

In September, Michelle Dicaire will be a second-year student in MacEwan University’s professional writing program.

WEB LINKS
employment.alberta.ca/safeh-youngworkers
Young workers’ health and safety links
employment.alberta.ca/5W/5102.html
Just the Facts: What Are the Top Dangers for Young Workers in the Workplace?
alis.alberta.ca/sp/careers/opshowproduct.html?DisplayCode=PRODUCT&EntityKey=1384
X-treme Safety: A Survival Guide for New and Young Workers
www.bloodylucky.ca
Bloody Lucky videos and stories about young workers

THINK HEALTH AND SAFETY TO PROTECT YOUR FUTURE
by Michelle Dicaire
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

August 2012, Volume 35, Number 2

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OCCUPATIONAL
HEALTH & SAFETY
NEWS & NOTES

BILL 1 TO LEGISLATE WCB COVERAGE FOR ALBERTA’S FIRST RESPONDERS

The Alberta government has introduced new legislation to streamline the process for Alberta’s first responders to receive Workers’ Compensation Board-Alberta coverage for post-traumatic stress disorder.

“There is increased awareness of the effects of PTSD over the last decade,” says Human Services Minister Dave Hancock. “This proposed legislation recognizes first responders who face traumatic experiences. We are proud to support them and bring forward legislation that leads the country.”

Changes proposed under Bill 1: The Workers’ Compensation Amendment Act will allow firefighters, police officers, sheriffs and paramedics to receive compensation for PTSD without having to prove their condition is work-related. Alberta will be the first province in Canada to provide such coverage.

PTSD is an intense emotional and psychological response to a recent or past traumatic event that is life-threatening, very disturbing or stressful. Symptoms include reliving the event through nightmares or flashbacks, emotional numbness, avoiding reminders of the event and being on edge or easily startled.

RANDOM SAFETY INSPECTIONS WORK

According to a new study out of the United States, random safety inspections improve workplace safety without burdening employers with extra expense or increasing job loss.

An environmental management expert at the Harvard Business School teamed up with economists from the University of California, Berkeley, and Boston University for the study. They matched more than 400 randomly inspected workplaces in California with un inspected, comparable workplaces. Then they compared the matched pairs’ health and safety records from four years before through four years after the date of the random inspection.

Workplace injuries were about nine per cent lower in inspected rather than un inspected workplaces in the four years following an inspection. Factoring in both medical treatment and missed work, the cost of injuries was 26 per cent lower. Based on independent financial information, the investigators found no effect from the inspections on employment, total earnings, sales or whether the company remained in business.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MAGAZINE IS AVAILABLE ONLINE. TO READ THE CURRENT ISSUE OR BACK ISSUES, PLEASE VISIT EMPLOYMENT.ALBERTA.CA/OHSMAG.
RADIATION PROTECTION REGULATION REVIEW

Alberta’s Radiation Protection Regulation is set to expire on March 31, 2013, and a review is underway. The regulation protects workers and the public from exposure to radiation by

- specifying maximum exposure limits
- listing designated radiation equipment that requires a registration certificate
- prescribing protective measures for the use of that equipment

Alberta Human Services has considered suggestions it received from workers and is now making recommendations for regulatory changes. Visit employment.alberta.ca/ohs-radiation for information on how to provide feedback on those proposed changes.

OH&S PENALTIES IN 2011 DOUBLE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR

In 2011, Alberta courts employed creative sentencing options to double the penalty total for workplace health and safety sentences compared to the previous year. The penalty total of more than $3.4 million is the second highest ever and double the 2010 total of $1.7 million. “My first choice is to have no workplace injuries or fatalities, no charges and no convictions,” says Dave Hancock, Minister of Human Services. “However, when the law is broken, we need to send strong messages that the health and safety of Albertans must be a priority.”

More than $2.3 million of the total 2011 penalties was in creative sentences paid to third parties, such as post-secondary institutions, training programs, rescue societies and other organizations that advance workplace health and safety. Individual creative sentences in 2011 ranged from $29,000 to $355,000.

One creative sentence provided the Fort McMurray/ Wood Buffalo office of St. John Ambulance with more than $330,000 for a new classroom training facility and to certify approximately 1000 high school students in standard first aid.

“We are very honoured to be considered for these funds,” says Beverly Lafontaine, vice-president of training and community services for St. John Ambulance, Alberta Council. “We’re committed to ensuring there will be plenty of positive outcomes from a tragic workplace incident.”

The option for creative sentences was brought in by an amendment to the occupational health and safety legislation in 2002. Since 2006, creative sentences have directed more than $10 million to organizations that promote workplace health and safety.

OH&S CODE EXPLANATION GUIDE UPDATE

The Occupational Health and Safety Code Explanation Guide was updated effective February 2012. Significant changes were made throughout Part 9 (Fall Protection) and Part 18 (Personal Protective Equipment). Part 21 (Rigging) has changes on pages 21-9 and 21-10.

The guide is available at www.employment.alberta.ca/SFW/3969.html.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MAGAZINE IS AVAILABLE ONLINE.

TO READ THE CURRENT ISSUE OR BACK ISSUES, PLEASE VISIT EMPLOYMENT.ALBERTA.CA/OHSMAG.
HELPING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MOVE FORWARD

Most people need help recognizing the signs of domestic violence and knowing how to help victims connect with the best community supports.

“Often, women in danger can be helped by someone they work with, a neighbour or a member of their own family,” says Carolyn Guard, director of member programs and services for the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters. “No one expects people to intervene themselves—it’s more about letting victims know you care and that you can connect them to the best resources in the field to help them be safe.”

The council has produced brochures to help the general public in this regard. Two of the brochures are aimed at the workplace: Domestic Violence Happens Everywhere is for the co-workers of victims; A Guide for Supervisors is for their supervisors and managers.

The brochures are part of a toolkit about domestic violence and the workplace. ACWS contact information is available at www.acws.ca/contact.php or call 780-456-7000.

STUDENT VIDEO CONTEST WINNERS

Congratulations to the winners of the 2012 Work Safe Alberta Student Video Contest!

First Place: “Don’t Let This Be You”
Students: Peter Johnson, John Johnson and Joshua Luyimbaza
School: Louis St. Laurent High School, Edmonton

Second Place: “Safety in Schools”
Students: Tej Goraya, Claire Paterson, Asier Azcueba, Kapil Kirkire, Brandon Raymond, Harit Shah, Darren Slack and Muhammad Sulemans
School: W. P. Wagner School, Edmonton

Third Place: “Work Place Hazards”
Students: Bosco Suen, Justin Ramsaran, Sheeraz Bhatti, Karl Kapelsky, Harsh Jindal, Ajay Singhim and Richard Wingo
School: W. P. Wagner School, Edmonton

Links to the winning videos are available at employment.alberta.ca/SFW/36088.html. Application forms and information about the 2013 contest will be posted in September.
OH&S CONSULTING ON ADMINISTRATIVE PENALTIES SYSTEM

Alberta Human Services is developing a new enforcement tool to ensure compliance with Alberta’s occupational health and safety legislation. The proposed tool would be an administrative penalties system (APS) for OH&S contraventions. It would allow OH&S to levy monetary penalties administratively, rather than requiring judicial action through the courts.

OH&S legislation seeks to reduce or eliminate the risk of harm or ill health to Alberta’s workers. One advantage of an APS is that OH&S can apply a penalty when a risk of harm or any other non-compliance occurs. In other words, an incident doesn’t need to occur—an APS will create a tool that can help prevent actual harm on Alberta work sites.

An APS works by focusing remedial action, which is preventive in nature, to address a health and safety issue and re-establish compliance with regulatory requirements.

Unlike an “on-the-spot” ticket, an administrative penalty would be issued based on an OH&S officer’s observations and background information about the work site.

Factors such as the following would be considered in determining whether an administrative penalty is warranted and, if so, the amount of the penalty:

- the degree of risk of harm
- the seriousness of the contravention
- the degree of willfulness or negligence contributing to the contravention
- the employer’s history of non-compliance

The OH&S Policy and Program Development Branch of Alberta Human Services has developed a draft proposed APS in collaboration with the OH&S Council. To understand the views of Albertan stakeholders—employers, workers, contractors, OH&S professionals and suppliers—OH&S is considering public input on the draft proposal. This input will help to finalize the proposal that will be submitted to the minister.

ALBERTA STUDENT AMONG CCOHS SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

University of Alberta student Peter Wowchuk was one of three recipients of the 2012 Dick Martin Scholarship Award. The $3000 scholarships are awarded by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety to post-secondary students enrolled in occupational health and safety programs in Canada.

“We were very pleased with the passion for health and safety each of the applicants exhibited this year and believe the three winners will make a unique contribution to the future of health and safety in Canadian workplaces,” says Steve Horvath, CCOHS president and CEO.

The other two recipients were Jennifer Hogan and Heather Young, both from Newfoundland. As part of the evaluation criteria for the award, applicants submitted essays on topics related to their area of study in occupational health and safety and were judged on their knowledge of the subject matter.

The CCOHS Council of Governors established the Dick Martin Scholarship Award in 2002. Martin was a past governor of CCOHS and a pioneer of workplace health and safety in Canada. He took a leading role in the establishment of April 28 as the annual Day of Mourning for Workers Killed and Injured at Work.

More information about the Dick Martin Scholarship Award is available at www.ccohs.ca/scholarship/.

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ERGO TIPS

THAT ERGONOMIC PRODUCT ISN’T ALWAYS ERGONOMIC

by Jasmine Lee

In the highly competitive world of consumer goods, many companies are vying for your hard-earned dollars. In an effort to distinguish products in huge box stores and 1000-page catalogues, marketers use a tactic I’d like to bring some attention to. Walk into any office, hardware or industrial supply shop and you’ll see “ergonomic” labels displayed on products throughout the store.

Statistics from the Workers’ Compensation Board-Alberta indicate that strains and strains account for a whopping 49 per cent of lost-time injury claims from 2007 to date in Alberta. So industry may merely be catering to a market demand. With overexertion alone adding up to about 22 per cent of the claims, musculoskeletal injuries are a contentious bone to pick.

As a result, when an employer or employee is left to choose from 10 different products that do the same job, it would be tempting to go for the “ergonomic” one. Who wouldn’t want a groovy new office chair that looks like it came off the set of the Star Trek Enterprise? Or a hand tool that claims it will provide extra contour that will revolutionize your (working) life?

I know I’ve been affected by such grandiose claims, but here’s the thing: let’s not lose sight of what “ergonomic” means. As the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health identifies in Easy Ergonomics: A Guide to Selecting Non-Powered Hand Tools, a tool becomes “ergonomic” only when it fits the task YOU are performing, and only when it fits YOUR hand without causing awkward postures, harmful contact pressures or other safety and health risks.

So that colourful hand tool with a bent handle that looks like it was left too close to the welding torch isn’t necessarily going to solve your wrist problems. You can’t buy a fancy new gadget and expect it to relieve all your aches and pains, case closed. Unless you know how to use it properly and are aware of its limitations, that same gadget may even increase harm to both employers and employees under a cloak of “improved safety.”

Take, for example, an “ergonomic” V-shaped keyboard that was designed with considerations to minimize a very common problem of muscle strain. The obvious alteration of these keyboard shapes from their conventional counterparts reminds the user to maintain a position considered more natural to the human form. My employer provided me with this option, and I find it extremely beneficial when I wind up at my desk for long periods attempting to write a witty and informative article. However, this fancy “ergonomic” keyboard isn’t doing anyone any favours if the user is still typing with bent wrists at a desk that is positioned too high. You can say “carpal tunnel syndrome” faster than saying good-bye to the extra money spent on “safety.” Alternately, the proper neutral position facilitated by the V-shaped keyboard can just as easily be attained and maintained with a basic keyboard, a properly adjusted workstation and some training.

Please don’t get me wrong—a lot of these products are taking a hot issue and adapting it into creative and innovative ways to assist in your daily duties. Many ergonomic-labelled items seen on store shelves can greatly improve or assist in work comfort, but only in conjunction with the proper training and awareness. So be aware: just because something is suddenly labelled “ergonomic” doesn’t mean it is ergonomic.

Jasmine Lee is an investigator with OH&S Provincial Standards in Alberta Human Services.

REFERENCES


WCB-Alberta General Statistics—All Industries. my.wcb.ab.ca/lcr/public/RetrieveReports.aspx
The following story is from our January 2008 issue. For more on this topic, read OH&S magazine’s 2012 fall issue for a feature story on how interpersonal relations affect safety on the job.

LOW-LEVEL WORKPLACE CONFLICT
NOT SOMETHING YOU CAN IGNORE

by Mary Anne Gorman

John has recently joined the XYZ Company. He comes with an impressive set of qualifications and glowing references. Shortly after his arrival, his supervisor, Molly, notices that John is being isolated from his work team. She sees that when he makes a point during team meetings, his co-workers roll their eyes. Some even wheel their chairs around to face the wall when he is talking. She’s also heard the team gossiping around the water cooler about how John thinks he’s too good to keep the same hours they do. They make it a practice to come in half an hour early each day, whereas John prefers to arrive at the official start time.

Conflict that may at first appear trivial has the potential to cause even more serious issues than staff turnover and lost productivity.

Molly asks herself whether she should intervene, but decides it’s best to leave well enough alone and let the group work things out for themselves. However, a few weeks later, she is saddened to find John’s letter of resignation on her desk.

The costs of conflict
Molly’s experience illustrates what can happen when low-level conflict is allowed to fester in the workplace. It also points to the crux of many workplace conflicts—a lack of understanding of the unwritten rules and values in the work environment.

“If a new employee’s behaviour violates an organization’s unwritten rules, it creates conflict for everyone concerned. Unless the behaviour is addressed early on, it can escalate and lead to lost productivity, absenteeism and other unwanted costs to the organization,” says Judy Brooks, managing director of ProActive Resolutions, an international company with an Edmonton branch dedicated to preventing and managing workplace violence.

“Ninety per cent of people quit not because of the work but because of the people at work,” Brooks says. She cites some other statistics that may surprise aspiring managers. “Managers spend about 50 per cent of their time dealing with conflict. For senior managers who deal with cases that go to litigation, the figure rises to 75 per cent.”

If workplace conflict goes unchecked, a valued employee like John may quit. Or an employer may be forced to let an employee go. The loss of the employee’s contributions and the lowered staff morale that often comes with reduced productivity is only the half of it. There are also extra costs for recruiting, hiring and training a successor. And as Brooks reminds us, employee retention is already a great challenge in the current Alberta economy.

How conflict can spiral out of control
Conflict that may at first appear trivial has the potential to cause even more serious issues than staff turnover and lost productivity. It can lead to undesirable behaviour such as violations of workplace policy, human rights legislation and even criminal law (see sidebar, “Workplace Conflict Ladder,” page 11).

“We can rip the headlines from the newspapers to see
just where conflict in an organization can lead,” says Heather Gray, who heads up TAMA (Threat Assessment and Management Associates). And, she notes, recent changes to the legislation hold all company stakeholders accountable—from supervisors to chief executives—when a violent event occurs in the workplace.

**Conflict management strategies**

Early identification of conflict at work is the first step in managing it, advises Charmaine Hammond, president of Hammond Mediation and Consulting Group. Hammond trains workers and managers to watch for indicators of conflict and stress such as strained relationships and communication, or changes in hygiene, performance and appearance. She also promotes effective communication skills as a means of addressing conflict early on.

“People must have the confidence to initiate dialogue—the sooner the better, even if it’s uncomfortable. When communication becomes strained we start to make assumptions about what people think, want or need. If the assumptions are inaccurate, things become even more constrained. What’s exciting is that when people can talk in a safe, respectful manner, sharing common interests or concerns, they often come away with an enhanced relationship. Supervisors should not shy away from this.”

Supervisors are well advised to start with the least intrusive approach, for example, a private conversation with the individuals involved. Sources of conflict are not always what they seem. It is all too easy to attribute conflict to personality clashes. But, says threat specialist Gray, “I don’t believe there is such a thing as a personality conflict. When we go to the very core, we are talking about a conflict in values.”

As well, supervisors may wish to consult with HR and, depending on the nature of the conflict, call in an external expert skilled in conflict management.

Employers need to work at creating an environment of zero tolerance for abuse. They need supportive policies and procedures that cover workplace behaviour and procedures for reviewing and reporting policy abuse. “If employees feel safe and respected, and if those values and behaviours are modeled by management, employees are more likely to be happy and productive,” Hammond says.

We don’t get to choose who we work with. When you put together a group of individuals with different personalities and different values, the potential for conflict is always present. What is hilariously presented in the TV sitcom, “The Office,” is in reality no laughing matter.

“Even seemingly minor conflicts may not seem ‘low-level’ to the people involved,” says Gray. “Such issues, when combined with stresses in their personal lives, can be seriously detrimental to a worker’s mental and physical health.”

Creating a respectful working environment, learning to recognize the early warning signs of conflict, initiating conversations and consulting with the experts will all help to manage low-level conflict before it’s too late.

Mary Anne Gorman is a writer and editor.
**RESOURCES**

**WEB LINKS**

www.alta.gov.ab.ca/pdfs/shop/letstalk.pdf


Alberta Human Services, Career and Workplace Resources.

**IN THE ALBERTA GOVERNMENT LIBRARY**

(For contact information, see page 15.)

**VHS/DVD**

Conflict Resolution in Industrial Facilities

If conflict is allowed to fester and grow without resolution, it can lead to serious problems such as threats and even physical violence. Topics covered include how conflict can disrupt the workplace and how to recognize the common causes of workplace conflict. (DHD 014) This series also includes Conflict Resolution in the Office. (DHD 013)

Managing Aggression in the Workplace

How to prevent aggression at work and reduce risk and/or manage it when it happens. (DHD 015)

Eliminating Workplace Bullying

Who are the victims of bullying? What are the effects on the victims? What can a victim do? How do I know if I am a bully? And more. (HRV 213)

In This Together

Seven frontline employees speak directly to their peers about respect and harassment, including dealing with gossip and people who are in a bad mood. A non-threatening opinion survey is used to create a safe environment for viewers to re-evaluate their beliefs and actions. (HRV 253)

**11 EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF WORKPLACE CONFLICT**

1. People aren’t performing.
2. People are disengaging.
3. People are leaving.
4. People are off sick.
5. People are breaking the rules.
6. People aren’t working cooperatively.
7. People are talking disrespectfully.
8. People are gossiping about each other.
9. People are excluding each other.
10. People are laying formal complaints.
11. People’s behaviours are escalating.

Source: ProActive ReSolutions Inc.
FALL PROTECTION PREVENTS DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES

by Cameron Mercer

Falls are among the most common serious incidents and fatalities that Occupational Health and Safety officers respond to. Many falls happen at construction sites, but they also occur in almost every industry sector. And a fall can be devastating at almost any height.

It is essential to recognize that working at heights is a hazard. So many times the work is so short in length that people do not take the time to ask, “What can go wrong?” Or the work is such a common part of the job that workers get complacent and don’t give falling the respect it requires.

That being said, many employers and workers in Alberta take the risk of falling very seriously and have great protection systems in place. The culture of using fall protection is changing and people are noticing. If you work at heights you should ask some basic questions: How far can I fall? What can I fall on? What do I need to protect myself from falling? What legislation pertains to the potential falling risks I am exposed to?

Part 9 of the OHS Code addresses most of the information related to fall protection. When an OHS officer responds to a work site where there may be a risk of falling, the fall protection plan (section 140) will be one of the first things the officer asks to see. We will also ask to see what instruction has been provided to the workers (section 141). If these two sections are in place and being followed, the risk of falling is reduced substantially.

But that is not always the case! Some people have the certificate, yet observations confirm they are not applying their training. If that is the case, I ask how effective the training really was.

Thank you from OH&S to those of you who are integral in making this change and implementing fall protection into your work.

Cameron Mercer is an OHS officer with Alberta Human Services.

INvolving the worker in Hazard Assessments

by Brian Caruk

It is now fairly common knowledge that the Occupational Health and Safety Code requires employers to conduct hazard assessments before work begins at a work site. This step is also required before the construction of a new work site.

What may not be so evident is the statutory obligation to involve affected workers in this process. Alberta’s legislation used to leave some room for employers to perform these assessments on their own, but not anymore. In 2009 the words “if reasonably practicable” were removed from section 8(1) of the Code. This change imposes a positive duty on employers to involve affected workers in both the hazard assessment itself and in the control or elimination of identified hazards. It also ensures that information flows in both directions between employers and workers, not just from the top down.

When considered in the broader scheme of the legislation—the main purpose of which is to protect workers—this change makes considerable sense. Workers in the field or performing specific tasks will be intimately familiar with the risks and hazards that arise through the course of their days. Their familiarity will naturally vary, depending on the training and experience of each individual worker. Notwithstanding, taking worker observations and experiences into account will undoubtedly enhance the scope and thoroughness of what hazards or potential hazards an employer might identify on its own.

It should be further noted that this requirement also applies to those situations set out in section 7(4) of the Code where there is an obligation to repeat a hazard assessment. So, for instance, where a work process or operation changes an employer must involve affected workers in repeating the hazard assessment as well. This process should also increase communication between workers themselves, so that lost experienced individuals benefit from the insights of their more seasoned co-workers in a truly meaningful manner.

Brian Caruk is the Regulatory Unit Coordinator, Specialized Prosecutions, for Alberta Justice.
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REGISTER NOW!
From the January 2007 issue:

...the magazine has now been published for three decades! An eight-page publication dated March 1, 1976, described “Alberta’s new occupational health and safety program,” launched under the leadership of then-Minister of Labour Neil Crawford. By 1977, the Occupational Health and Safety Act had been passed, and the Alberta government had begun publishing OH&S magazine on a regular basis. The magazine has been available to Albertans ever since.

—Editor (May 2003 to January 2008), Anita Jenkins
THE LAST RESORT
REPORTING ON RECENT CONVICTIONS UNDER
THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT

Between October 24, 2011, and January 26, 2012, eight companies were convicted under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Denel Trucking (335590 Alberta Ltd.) and Keith Hargrave
On August 8, 2008, a driver was slowly moving a truck with two attached trailers to a wash bay in a backyard. A worker was steering the rear trailer from the controls located on the side of the trailer. He was walking beside the trailer while operating the controls when he was run over by the rear wheels of the trailer and fatally injured. On October 24, 2011, Denel Trucking pleaded guilty to Section 2(3)(a)(ii) of the OHS Act for failing to protect the health and safety of a worker engaged in the work of that employer. Keith Hargrave, a worker for Denel Trucking, pleaded guilty to section 229(a) of the OHS Act for failing to take care to protect the health and safety of a worker present while the worker was working. Denel Trucking received a total penalty of $286,500: $144,000 to the Job Safety Society ($109,000 to be allocated for the JobSafe Program and $35,000 to establish a scholarship program in honour of the deceased worker); $131,000 to the Alberta Motor Transport Association for the development of a course for the safe operation of specialized long combination vehicles; a fine of $10,000; and a $1500 victim surcharge. Hargrave received a $10,000 fine.

Clean Harbors Energy and Industrial Services Corp.
On February 4, 2009, a vacuum truck operator fell approximately five metres off the truck’s beavertail into a sump pit. He had been cleaning out the back of his vacuum truck. The worker sustained several fractures and injuries to his head and torso. On November 9, 2011, Clean Harbors Energy and Industrial Services Corp., formerly known as Eveready Energy Services Corp., pleaded guilty to Section 2(1)(a)(ii) of the OHS Act for failing to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable for the employer to do so, the health and safety of workers engaged in the work of that employer. Clean Harbors Energy and Industrial Services Corp. received a total penalty of $85,000: a fine of $5000 inclusive of the victim fine surcharge and a payment of $80,000 to the Keyano College Occupational Health and Safety Certificate program for course upgrading and development.
Roofmart Alberta Inc.
On May 21, 2009, a boom truck operator was fatally injured as he attempted to repair an articulating boom crane. An elevated section of the crane collapsed and pinned him against another section of the crane. On November 14, 2011, Roofmart Alberta Inc. pleaded guilty to Section 261 of the OH&S Code for failing to ensure that if elevated parts of powered mobile equipment are being maintained or repaired by workers, the parts and the powered mobile equipment are securely blacked in place and cannot move accidentally. Roofmart Alberta Inc. received a total penalty of $350,000: a fine of $10,000; a victim fine surcharge of $15,000; and a payment of $138,500 to the Fort McMurray/Wood Buffalo office of St. John Ambulance. This payment will provide first aid education and a training classroom facility in Fort McMurray ($200,000 allocated to the classroom facility and $138,500 to train and certify approximately 1000 high school students from the Fort McMurray area in standard first aid).

GLP Instrumentation Inc. and Sebastian Berube
On April 18, 2008, a worker was welding a fitting on the top of a biodiesel settling tank when the tank exploded. The worker was fatally injured in the explosion. On November 22, 2011, GLP Instrumentation Inc. pleaded guilty to Section 2(1)(a)(ii) of the OH&S Act for failing to ensure the health and safety of a worker engaged in the work of that employer. Sebastian Berube pleaded guilty to Section 2(2)(a) of the OH&S Act for failing to take care to protect the health and safety of a worker present while the worker was working. GLP Instrumentation Inc. received a total penalty of $411,250: a fine of $175,000 and a $236,250 victim fine surcharge. Berube received a total penalty of $17,250: a fine of $15,000 and a victim fine surcharge of $2250.

Bonterra Energy Corp.
On May 14, 2009, a worker contracted to Bonterra Energy Corp. was fatally injured when a rotating counterclockwise of an oilwell pumpjack struck the worker. On December 3, 2011, Bonterra Energy Corp. pleaded guilty to Section 319(2)(a) of the OH&S Code for failing to provide safeguards if a worker may accidently, or through the work process, come into contact with moving parts of machinery or equipment. Bonterra Energy Corp. received a total penalty of $275,000: a fine of $25,000; a payment of $250,000 to Enform and the Alberta Workers’ Health Centre; and a payment of $22,500 to the Work Pays School Program (a program of the Alberta Workers’ Health Centre).

Dreco Energy Services Ltd.
On October 17, 2008, a worker was electrocuted while welding from an aerial platform. The moving platform struck and severed the rubber insulating coating of the welding current conductor cable, energizing the platform. On December 15, 2011, Dreco Energy Services Ltd. pleaded guilty to Section 12(4) of the OH&S Code for failing to ensure that equipment and supplies are erected, installed, assembled, started, operated, handled, stored, serviced, tested, adjusted, calibrated, maintained, repaired and dismantled in accordance with the manufacturer’s specifications or the specifications certified by a professional engineer. Dreco Energy Services Ltd. received a total penalty of $385,500: a fine of $10,000 inclusive of the victim fine surcharge; a payment of $240,000 to NAIT for the development of an aerial platform course and the establishment of a Trades Apprenticeship Endowment in honour of the deceased worker; and a payment of $115,000 to Norquest College for the development of a safety course on intercultural communications for on-site workers.

On February 6, 2008, a worker received serious head injuries when a drilling line was inadvertently rotated while work was being carried out on the equipment. On January 16, 2012, K-Tec Industries (2005) Inc. pleaded guilty to Section 212(1) of the OH&S Code for failing to ensure that no worker performs such work on the machinery, equipment or powered mobile equipment until it has come to a complete stop if machinery, equipment or powered mobile equipment is to be serviced, repaired, tested, adjusted or inspected. K-Tec Industries (2005) Inc. was sentenced to a total penalty of $75,000 inclusive of the victim fine surcharge.

Settlement Transportation Services Inc.
On July 15, 2006, a Caterpillar dozer operator was assisting another Caterpillar dozer operator to attach two fallen trees to the rear ripper shank of the Caterpillar dozer. The worker was crushed between the ripper framework and the tree rootball as the Caterpillar dozer was backing up. On January 26, 2012, Settlement Transportation Services Inc. pleaded guilty to section 2(1)(a)(ii) of the OH&S Act for failing to ensure, as far as it is reasonably practicable for the employer to do so, the health and safety of workers engaged in the work of that employer. Settlement Transportation Services Inc. was sentenced to pay a fine of $250,000: a fine of $1000, including the victim fine surcharge; and a payment of $249,000 for the establishment of a health and safety management system for the Fishing Lake Métis Settlement.
SETTING THE STAGE FOR SAFETY

KEEPING ALBERTA’S FESTIVALS SAFE FOR STAFF, PERFORMERS AND GUESTS

by Wes Bellmore

There is nothing quite as cheerful as a red-and-white striped tent, a glittering bandstand and the wafting aroma of mini doughnuts. It seems the moment the garage doors swing shut on the last snowplow, festivals large and small spring up across Alberta. Swarms of workers spend frantic days and nights assembling temporary structures that must endure whatever the sky throws at them while providing safe, comfortable shelter for guests, performers, vendors, staff and volunteers.

A festival site presents many of the same workplace health and safety concerns as any construction site: cranes, forklifts, delivery trucks, electrical cables, scaffolding, trailers and propane bottles, to name a few. When you factor in tight deadlines and the prevalence of volunteer workers with varying degrees of experience, the safety challenges of putting on a show become clear.

Hands empty, heads up!
Don Snider knows festivals. As production manager for the Edmonton Folk Music Festival, he shepherds 200 volunteers on a 33-acre site to build stages, tents, walkways and scaffolding for the entire event. He says experience and communication are two key factors for setting up a big show.

“We work as a team,” he says. “We look out for each other and we eat together, which is when I talk to them as a group.”

In addition to standard warnings about heat, sun exposure, protective gear and proper hydration, Snider makes sure his workers are fully briefed about the day’s planned activities. “Lack of coordination is the biggest safety concern. The crew has to stay focused and on task. If they are not, that is when accidents could happen.”

“The biggest hazard for outdoor festivals is weather, especially in the summer.”
— Fazal Hussain, Safety Engineering Specialist, Government of Alberta

Even though many people have been working for the festival for many years, Snider is adamant that his supervisors remain diligent. “My motto for supervisors is ‘hands empty, heads up,’” he says. “That means a supervisor should not be working [at a specific task], because he or she needs to be keeping an eye on what’s going on. You can’t supervise a crew if you’re rummaging around at the front of a 40-foot trailer. You need to be watching and guiding.”

Volunteers do the work on the festival site, but Snider says it all passes code because they are well supervised and engaged in what they do.
“...volunteers may not have OH&S training, so it’s important to create a climate where people can speak up and ask questions.”

Alberta and offered her expertise. The result was a 190-page binder called Safe Stages, a joint effort of Theatre Alberta and Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry (now Alberta Human Services).

The first half of the binder outlines how Alberta Occupational Health and Safety operates. The second half contains best practices, specific issues, forms and risks broken down by category: physical, chemical, biological and psycho-social (such as working alone, violence and fatigue).

“The target audience of Safe Stages is very broad,” says Sellery. “It’s for everyone who is producing theatre in Alberta: professionals, schools, communities, venue operators, actors, volunteers...there is good useful information in there for literally everyone.”

According to her, some of the biggest issues in theatre safety are preparation, planning and hazard assessment. “Theatre workers and volunteers may not have OH&S training,” says Sellery, “so it’s important to create a
climate where people can speak up and ask questions. If they don’t feel secure enough to ask a question, they probably won’t tell someone if they are in over their head, or don’t know how to use a certain tool.”

The show must go on...but not today
Sellery says a crucial aspect for safety planning is deciding under what conditions the show can be cancelled. She says a single individual must be given full authority to pull the plug at a moment’s notice. “You might need to discuss the issue with many people and groups well beforehand,” says Sellery, “because cancelling a show might have serious economic effects, but there has to be a very clear plan about what to do if weather conditions turn bad.”

Fazal Hussain is a safety engineering specialist with the Government of Alberta. He agrees that event organizers need to keep an eye on the sky and be ready for the worst. “The biggest hazard for outdoor festivals is weather, especially in the summer,” says Hussain, “and it should be addressed with other workplace hazards in the mandatory hazard assessment. You need to have an emergency plan to respond to conditions. How do you propose to deal with changing circumstances?”

Rehearsal is a way of life for performances, and it should be no different in the occupational safety world, says Hussain. He advises event organizers to consider many questions and to practise their emergency plans with staff. “How do you minimize damage?” he says. “How do you respond to the threat of high winds or rain? How do you evacuate a large number of people in a limited time to a safe place? Do you need first aid services? How far is the hospital?”

Hussain points out that knowing the appropriate OH&S Code requirements for safe workplaces is crucial. The information is all online, complete with additional explanations. No matter how complicated the scenery, equipment or site plan, each aspect must meet strict guidelines to ensure worker safety, he concluded.

You there, behind the stage, take a bow
When everything goes right, safety is invisible. The job gets done, nobody gets hurt and the show goes on. For Snider and his crew, the sound of a successful event is music to their ears. “We put this show together,” he says. “We built the tents, we hoisted the lights, we lugged and carried, we operated the equipment and unloaded the trucks. So when we hear the applause, part of that is for us. It’s why we keep coming back.”

Wes Bellmore is a freelance writer living in Edmonton.

### Resources

**WEB LINKS**

- [www.theatrealberta.com/safe-stages](http://www.theatrealberta.com/safe-stages)
  
  Safe Stages is a joint initiative of Theatre Alberta and Alberta Human Services. It is a guide to occupational health and safety legislation for employers and workers in Alberta’s theatre community, with best practices, forms and additional resources.

  
  *Getting the Stage: A Community-Based Festival and Event-Planning Manual* provides tools, templates and resources to help committees navigate through the planning, production and evaluation processes.

**IN THE ALBERTA GOVERNMENT LIBRARY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sun Safety for Outdoor Workers (DVD 050)</td>
<td>VHS/DVD</td>
<td>This program from the Canadian Dermatology Association will help outdoor workers learn the facts about and ways to protect themselves from skin cancer. They will find out who is at risk for skin cancer, when sun protection is needed, safe and easy ways to protect against the sun, what skin cancer looks like, and what to do if they find a suspicious mole or spot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heat Stress (VC 0253)</td>
<td>VHS/DVD</td>
<td>More and more “illnesses” are arising from employees working in abnormally high-temperature jobs. This program explains heat stroke, heat stress, fainting and how to prevent stress related to a hot environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heat Stress: Don’t Lose Your Cool (VC 0376)</td>
<td>VHS/DVD</td>
<td>This program is for anyone who works in hot environments, both indoors and out. It outlines the effects, symptoms and treatments of heat stress disorders, as well as precautions to take in order to avoid them.</td>
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PARTNERSHIPS NEWS

Expectations of a Certificate of Recognition holder

Although a Certificate of Recognition audit doesn’t assess an employer’s level of compliance with legislation, COR-holding employers are expected to meet their health and safety responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Regulation and Code. To verify this expectation, Partnerships checks each employer’s compliance history before issuing a new COR or processing a COR maintenance audit. If the check identifies any outstanding compliance orders, the audit will not be processed until the orders are closed. If any orders remain open more than four months after Partnerships received the COR certification or maintenance request, the request will not be approved.

The employer will have to conduct a new audit.

Partnerships also monitors employers on an ongoing basis. COR holders with a history of compliance orders or multiple stop-work orders due to imminent danger will be considered for an Employer Review. The Employer Review process requires the completion of an action plan designed to address any identified health and safety weaknesses. Any WCB-Alberta Partnerships in Injury Reduction rebates the employer is entitled to will be put on hold until the successful completion of the action plan. Employers that do not cooperate with the process, or do not meet the agreed-upon timelines for completing an action plan, will have their COR cancelled and will forfeit any pending WCB rebates.

COR holders are also eligible for an Employer Review if they experience a workplace fatality or a serious injury or incident. Employers that have held a COR for four years or more and have been in the Employer Injury and Illness Prevention Program for four years or more will be placed under review by Partnerships. Full Employer Reviews will also be conducted for employers that have knowingly misrepresented worker injury reports under the Workers’ Compensation Act.

Any COR holders that experience a second fatality or serious incident or injury or repeated stop-work orders within 24 months of completing an Employer Review will be required to conduct a full external audit and complete another action plan with Partnerships.

On-Site Audit Reviews added to Partnerships process

The On-Site Audit Review pilot process, completed in March 2011, indicated that most auditors meet Partnerships’ audit standards. However, seven per cent used inappropriate shortcuts, deliberately misrepresented audit results or violated the Auditor Code of Ethics. Partnerships will make OSARs a permanent part of the audit quality assurance process. It will maintain the credibility of the many reputable auditors in the program and ensure employers receive accurate audit reports that will help them improve their OH&S systems. Partnerships will conduct approximately 100 OSARs annually to validate the audit processes used by external auditors. The number of OSARs sampled for each Certifying Partner will be based on the number of external audits completed by the association every year.

Although OSARs assess auditors, reviewers require the participation of employers that have recently completed an external audit. Reviews will take no more than one day at the employer’s work site. Employers whose external auditors are selected for an OSAR are required to participate. They will be contacted by the Certifying Partner and given the name of the reviewer who will schedule the review.

In the event that an OSAR identifies significant deficiencies in an employer’s health and safety system, the Certifying Partner will work with the employer to make any improvements required. An employer’s COR status will not be jeopardized by OSAR results.

For more information on the Employer Review or the OSAR, contact your Certifying Partner or visit our website at employment.alberta.ca/wha-partnerships/.

Partnerships in Injury Reduction is a non-regulatory, province-wide injury prevention program sponsored co-operatively by government, labour and industry. The program offers:

- tools to implement a health and safety management system
- guidance in applying for a Certificate of Recognition (COR)
- potential for premium rebates from the Workers’ Compensation Board-Alberta

For more information, call the Partnerships Hotline at 1-866-415-8690 or visit employment.alberta.ca/OHS-partnerships/.
FATALITIES
WORKPLACE INCIDENT FATALITIES INVESTIGATED IN ALBERTA


Occupational Health and Safety investigates most work-related incident fatalities that fall under provincial jurisdiction. In general, OH&S does not investigate highway traffic, farm or medically related fatalities. In many cases, investigations into the fatalities described here are continuing. Final investigation reports are filed at the Alberta Government Library – Telus Plaza Site and can be reviewed there or at employment.alberta.ca/whs-fatalities.

Year-to-date occupational fatalities investigated in 2012 (as of February 28): 5
Occupational fatalities investigated from January 1 to February 28, 2011: 4
Total occupational fatalities investigated in 2011: 28
Total occupational fatalities investigated in 2010: 33


A worker was performing maintenance on a pump jack brake assembly at an oil lease. While working in close proximity to the pump jack unit, he was crushed under the counterweights that are part of the pump jack structural assembly. The worker was pronounced dead at the scene.

A worker who was part of a crew doing a well-servicing job died after being overcome by hydrogen sulfide gas.

A worker who was waiting to receive a piping pig, which is a piece of pipe equipment, died after being struck in the face with piping.

A worker was disassembling a chassis for a 1.5 ton vehicle. The chassis fell while the worker was underneath it, crushing him. He was taken to hospital in critical condition and later died from his injuries.

A worker was crushed between a 400-barrel oil tank and a trailer while the tank was being loaded.

A sideboom operator was crushed when the sideboom flipped over in a ditch while the operator was performing pipeline work.

If you’re interested in sharing opinions or comments about workplace health and safety issues, please contact the magazine’s editor through the WHS Contact Centre, 1-866-415-8690 (or 780-415-8690, if you are in the Edmonton area), or e-mail whs@gov.ab.ca.
TRUST your GUT!
If your safety senses start to tingle, stop and consider – if it doesn’t feel right, it probably isn’t. Talk to your boss.

Heads Up – Young Worker Safety  @HeadsUpAB