HOW TO SURVIVE A NIGHT IN THE GRAVEYARD
Remember when a ball-cap was all you really needed for head protection, if you even thought you needed head protection? Or when a pair of old sneakers was the order of the day, whether you were shovelling gravel or running a loader? We’ve learned a lot since then.

But in spite of the unfortunate and costly lessons to date, there remains a mountain to scale when it comes to safety in the workplace. As most know, keeping employees motivated and actively participating in anything safety related is an ongoing, uphill climb. And while I’ve not conquered that Everest (yet), I’ve been fortunate as a National Construction Safety Officer with BURNCO Rock Products Ltd. to witness how the support of senior management can directly and positively influence the rank and file of nearly 850 employees.

Beginning with compliance to provincial and federal legislation, the BURNCO executive developed safety policies that clearly demonstrate a full and unqualified commitment to safety in every facet of the business. In support of those policies BURNCO employs two full-time safety supervisors, who developed in-house training programs and a comprehensive safety plan that are designed to educate, motivate and involve.

One major component of the plan is a mobile safety library, located in every site office and relevant to its respective division (i.e., asphalt, ready-mix, aggregate or landscape). Housed in binders, the library provides fingertip access to OH&S codes, regulations and legislation; site-specific material safety information; company policies, codes of conduct and safety manuals; job hazard analysis reports; emergency response plans; safe work practice directives and more.

A second important component is the corporate safety reports, which contain WCB stats for the week; reminders of safety and wellness procedures, especially in those areas that may be challenging; advice of changes to OH&S legislation; and motivational “pearls of wisdom.” Those reports are e-mailed, faxed and/or snail-mailed to all site offices, weekly.

Third, in consideration of the fact our employees indeed have lives outside the workplace, we maintain visible community and family service referral information.

We post that information in posters displayed at our work sites and flanked by our mission and value statements.

The fourth component is the backbone of BURNCO’s safety plan. It consists of monthly site inspections. Conducted by a seasoned supervisor and one or two workers (who alternate each month), these “walkabouts” not only identify site problem areas but provide a forum in which workers feel included, consulted and valued. Results are subsequently discussed with the entire staff in tailgate meetings. These meeting are deliberately informal to accommodate and encourage constructive, informative and non-accusatory resolutions to identified weaknesses. We then implement corrective actions in a timely manner.

Lower injury rates are most important, but another reward of a functioning and successful safety program is recognition from our peers, the industry and government. This recognition has included several safety awards and nominations, including the 2009 (won) and 2010 (nominated) Trailblazer Award, recognition through the 2009 Partnerships in Injury Reduction Program (from Alberta Employment and Immigration and WCB-Alberta) and the B.C. Ready Mix Concrete Association 2010 Innovation Award, which proves that successful programs are inter-provincially applicable.

But not to rest on our laurels, we continue to strive for excellence. All levels of the company, spearheaded by the safety team, help maintain a successful safety program.

Mo Gudzowaty is a former RCMP officer and the current NCSO for BURNCO Rock Products Ltd., based in Calgary. For more information or details about BURNCO’s safety plan, feel free to contact Mo at mo.gudzowaty@burnco.com, or call (403) 640-9268.
**Occupational Health & Safety**

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The magazine is also available as a PDF file at www.employment.alberta.ca/SFW/12240.html.

Contacting the editor: We welcome responses to articles or information published in this magazine, as well as suggestions for future articles. You can reach the editor through the Contact Centre. Phone 1-866-415-8690 or e-mail whs@gov.ab.ca.

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Employer records
Alberta has taken a leading role in Canada by making workplace injury and fatality records public. By releasing this information, the Alberta government wants to encourage more discussion around what we can all do to help keep people safe in the workplace.

Where to go “to know”
The employer records are available at www.employment.alberta.ca/employerrecords

For more information, call the Occupational Health and Safety Contact Centre:
• 1-866-415-8690 (Toll-free within Alberta)
• 780-415-8690 (Edmonton and surrounding area)
• email whs@gov.ab.ca

Deaf/hard of hearing with TDD/TTY:
• 780-427-9999 in Edmonton
• 1-800-232-7215 throughout Alberta
A new advisory council will be formed in Alberta to help reduce injuries on farms and ranches. It will make recommendations to government on how to enhance farm safety education and training.

The Farm Safety Advisory Council will be co-chaired by and include members from government and industry. It is being formed in response to recommendations from industry stakeholder consultations.

“This council will bring industry and government together to find ways to reduce farm injuries without increasing the regulatory and financial burden on our producers,” said Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Jack Hayden. “We need to work together to find solutions.”

In 2009 and 2010, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development and Employment and Immigration consulted with more than 20 stakeholder groups to get their input on how to enhance the health and safety of people working on farms and ranches in Alberta. The consultation included all major commodity groups, representing approximately 50,000 producers.

The consultation report, Stakeholder Consultation: Occupational Health and Safety, is available on the Agriculture and Rural Development website.

The co-chairs and council members will be announced in 2011. Members will include representatives from farm safety organizations, municipalities, agricultural organizations and farm workers. They will have diverse backgrounds and a strong commitment to improving farm safety in Alberta.

Once established, the council will develop a joint industry-government action plan on farm safety that will address the coordination and communication needs identified by industry in recent consultations. The plan will be submitted to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for government consideration.

For more information on Alberta’s Farm Safety Program, the Farm Safety Advisory Council and the stakeholder consultation, please visit agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety.
WINTER WORK SAFETY

A cold environment challenges workers in three ways: air temperature, air movement (wind speed) and humidity (wetness). These challenges have to be counterbalanced by proper insulation (layered protective clothing), by physical activity and by controlled exposure to cold (work/rest schedule).

The most serious concern for people working at very cold temperatures is the risk of hypothermia. Hypothermia is a medical emergency that involves dangerous overcooling of the body. Another serious effect of cold exposure is frostbite or freezing of the extremities, such as fingers, toes, the nose and ear lobes.

The risk of cold injury can be minimized by proper equipment design, safe work practices and appropriate clothing.

Equipment Design
- Metal handles and bars should be covered by insulating material.
- Machines and tools should be designed for operation without having to remove mittens or gloves.

Surveillance and Monitoring
- Every workplace where the temperature may fall below 16°C should be equipped with a suitable thermometer.
- If temperatures are below the freezing point, the temperature should be monitored at least every 4 hours.
- For outdoor workplaces, both air temperature and wind speed should be recorded.

Emergency Procedures
- Procedures for providing first aid and obtaining medical care should be clearly outlined.
- For each shift, at least one trained person should be assigned the responsibility of attending to emergencies.

Education
- Workers and supervisors involved with work in cold environments should be informed about the symptoms of hypothermia and frostbite, proper clothing habits, safe work practices, physical fitness requirements for work in cold, and emergency procedures in case of cold injury.
- While working in cold, a buddy system should be used.
- Look out for one another and be alert for the symptoms of hypothermia.

HEALTH AND SAFETY SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety is now accepting entries for the 2010–11 Dick Martin Scholarship. Awarded annually, this $3000 national scholarship is available to any student enrolled, either full-time or part-time, in an occupational health and safety-related course or program leading to an occupational health and safety certificate, diploma or degree at an accredited college or university in Canada.

The CCOHS Council of Governors established this scholarship in 2002 in memory of Dick Martin, a tireless health and safety advocate and a pioneer of workplace health and safety in Canada.

To apply for the award, post-secondary students are invited to submit a 1000 to 1200 word essay on a topic that best describes their aspirations in the field of occupational health and safety. Entries will be judged on their knowledge of the subject matter, their understanding of the principles and values of Dick Martin, and their understanding of the role of CCOHS.

Deadline for entries: 5:00 p.m., January 31, 2011
More information: www.ccohs.ca/scholarship/entries/

NAOSH WEEK 2011

Watch for North American Occupational Safety and Health Week activities from May 1 to 7, 2011. NAOSH Week is an excellent opportunity to focus, reinforce and strengthen your commitment to occupational safety and health.

The theme for 2011 is “What’s Your Plan?” Your workplace can take part by
- setting new goals for workplace health and safety
- creating awareness of these goals within and outside your organization
- making a plan to accomplish these goals

NAOSH Week is led by the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering in partnership with the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Threads of Life, the American Society of Safety Engineers and partners in Mexico.
TAKE CARE OF IT BEFORE IT’S AN INJURY

If you see something unsafe, do something about it.
That’s how you prevent a workplace injury. That’s how you stay safe. Learn more at worksafe.alberta.ca or call toll-free 1-866-415-8690 (Edmonton and area (780) 415-8690).
"Is this stuff bulletproof?" customers frequently ask me as they tap the two-inch barrier that separates us. "I don’t know," is my stock response. "I’ve never tested it."

It’s a lame joke, but the truth is I’m thankful every day for that thick layer of protective glass. I’m not exaggerating when I suggest it has saved my life at least a dozen times since I started working the graveyard shift. If I had a shiny nickel every time a disgruntled customer said they wanted to express their dissatisfaction by repeatedly punching me in the face, I would have a lot of shiny nickels. More significantly, without that glass between us, I would have a seriously damaged face.

To find out how other companies keep employees safe, I spoke to Doug Hartl, a former RCMP officer. He is the manager of security with Mac’s Convenience Stores and vice chair of the Western Canadian Convenience Stores Association. He described the steps his industry takes to keep its graveyard employees safe.

“We have guidelines that limit the amount of cash from early evening to early morning,” says Hartl, “and we limit our tobacco and lottery tickets on display. Businesses such as ours also place cash handling in an area of high visibility—that can reduce robberies.”

Hartl says the environmental design of stores can help with crime prevention. It’s important to look at the layout.
of your store or business and think about what will deter robberies and keep employees safe. “There are also a number of other security measures that we employ that I don’t want to make public, as it only educates the bad guys,” he added.

Despite the unpleasant reality of its risks, I’ve always felt there is something exotic and exciting about going to work at the hour when most others are going to bed. And there are more of us than you might think. My fellow “graves” include security guards and custodians, night auditors, arena and pool maintenance people, service technicians and mechanics, health care workers, late night retail workers and, of course, taxi drivers.

“A worker is considered to be working alone if he or she is working by himself or herself in circumstances where assistance is not readily available if there is an emergency or the worker becomes injured or ill.”

All of us have our own reasons for working the late shift. Some do it for the wage bonuses that are sometimes paid during these hours; others are just happy to have a job. And then there’s people like me, who enjoy the independence and relative freedom that often come when you’re working while everyone else is asleep.

However, that freedom and independence also come with a higher degree of danger and responsibility for both the employed and the employer. Having employees work alone, especially late at night, can be both economical and efficient, but it has its own risks, all of which must be carefully managed.

Mark Rice, a workplace standards policy and legislation expert with Alberta Employment and Immigration, says the Occupational Health & Safety Code spells out the conditions requiring special attention when a worker is alone.

“A worker is considered to be working alone if he or she is working by himself or herself in circumstances where assistance is not readily available if there is an emergency or the worker becomes injured or ill.”

In these cases, Rice says, “Employers are required to assess their workplace and implement preventive measures that eliminate or minimize risks.”

Steps that should be taken by employers include hazard assessments of the work site and training for staff about the dangers of working alone. Employers have to closely examine and identify existing or potential safety hazards in the workplace, says Hartl. The assessment should be in writing and communicated to all staff who work nights. Staff should be educated about the preventive steps that can be taken to reduce potential risks.

Rice adds, “Employers must ensure that employees working alone have some effective way of communicating with individuals who can respond immediately if there is an emergency or the worker is injured or ill.”

This requirement can be problematic for business owners who don’t like being awoken at 2:00 a.m. by phone calls from frantic employees, but there are several options. One is to provide employees with third-party personal alarms to be worn at all times while on shift. They can receive near-immediate attention with a single press of a button.

I have one. Fortunately, I have never had to use it. But during every shift I work, I make and receive regular hourly calls to our other 24-hour branches in order to check on my fellow graves. This safety protocol has the added benefit of keeping the less-seasoned of us awake, and it gives us the opportunity to rant about the dysfunctional customers we’ve served that night.

Janet Murphy, a safety consultant at ProTELEC Alarms, says some employers don’t have a large enough network to support that kind of communication. Companies like ProTELEC offer services to fill that need. “Our CheckMate (system) is an automated communication service designed to check on people working alone to ensure their safety,” she says.

While some graveyard jobs do require employees to handle potentially hazardous materials or work with dangerous equipment, one of the greatest safety threats we face comes in the form of other folks who refuse to abide by the conventional clock. Since I’ve started working graves I can honestly estimate that I’ve received death threats at a rate of about one a week.

Ninety-nine per cent of the time I dismiss these incidents as impotent acts of aggression from frustrated
people, but even a jaded grave like myself cannot help but wonder how many might be serious.

I asked Hartl, the former RCMP officer, for his thoughts. “Based on my experience any threat should be assessed and, if thought to be a real threat, should be taken seriously,” he said. “If you honestly feel threatened, you should report the threats, as the person has no doubt threatened others.”

It’s good advice, which I plan to take to heart as I continue my personal graveyard adventure. Working nights is definitely not for everyone, but the benefits for me outweigh the risks, especially when I take into account the steps my employer has made to keep me safe—that wonderful bulletproof glass being the chief among them.

Allan Mott is a freelance writer living in Edmonton. His most recent books include Scary Movies and Haunting Fireside Stories.

RESOURCES

WEB LINKS
employment.alberta.ca/documents/WHS/WHSPUB_workingalone.pdf
Working Alone Safety: A Guide for Employers and Employees
The original version of this report was prepared by the Minister’s Committee to Promote Health and Safety—Working Alone Best Practices.

www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/violence.html
This question-and-answer guide on workplace violence is published by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.

employment.alberta.ca/whs/learning/Shiftwork/index.html
Shift Work and Fatigue
This online program from Work Safe Alberta discusses the effects of shift work. It offers tips for workers and workplaces to help handle the effects of shift work.

OTHER GUIDES
SAFE HABITS, SAFE PEOPLE 2010: WORKING ALONE
SAFETY GUIDE FOR EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS
From the Western Convenience Stores Association

IN THE ALBERTA GOVERNMENT LIBRARY
(For contact information, please see page 13.)

DVD/VHS
BE SURE ... BE SAFE: SAFETY IN THE HEALTHCARE WORKPLACE (DVD 032)
This three-in-one program illustrates the hazards of working alone with aggressive and potentially violent clients, client handling activities and needle use. Using enactments, each program portrays situations that healthcare workers might encounter on the job and reviews what they need to do in response to these hazards.

VIOLENCE ON THE JOB (DVD 003)
This video discusses practical measures for identifying risk factors regarding violence at work, and taking strategic action to keep employees safe. It is based on extensive research from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, supplemented with information from other authoritative sources.

ROBBERY AWARENESS EDUCATION KIT (VC 0334)
This “kit” is designed to create awareness among employees and your customers. The video is intended to train all existing and new employees about how to assess your potential for being robbed. The manual will ensure that all employees are aware of the most common scams and frauds and the necessary prevention methods.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE—IT’S EVERYBODY’S BUSINESS (VC 0348)
This video promotes awareness and worker training in dealing with workplace violence. It describes and demonstrates different types of workplace violence situations and typical components of a workplace violence prevention program.
I’m quite certain that you’ve all been waiting eagerly to see what practical yet fascinating information I would reveal in my next column. But before I get into this edition of Ergo Tips, I’ll quickly recap what was covered in the last edition so that you can link it all together.

I covered one of the most important factors in ergonomics, “ideal alignment.” Ideal alignment is “a balanced posture in which positioning is centred and relaxed for all the joints of the body.” Being in ideal alignment is important because it can prevent unnecessary muscular tension. Take a moment and ensure that you are in ideal alignment right now. I wouldn’t want reading this column to cause you any sort of trauma!

Now that our bodies are blissfully in ideal alignment, I’ll talk about making the right moves to maintain it. The concept of performing stretching exercises at work is not new. It is easy to find studies and articles that assert the benefits of stretching in an occupational setting. However, it must also be mentioned that stretching is most effective when incorporated into an overall injury prevention program. Disclaimer aside, let’s get into the stretches.

Stretching is one of the simplest physical activities. It can be done almost anywhere and is a great antidote to long periods of inactivity or repetitive movements. However, not all stretching was created equally. There are three different types of stretches that need to be considered and reviewed: static, ballistic and proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation, or PNF (try to say it quickly three times).

PNF—where a muscle is contracted for 15 to 20 seconds, relaxed and then stretched—provides the greatest stretching effect. Static stretching, where the muscle is slowly stretched and held, is simpler to perform and very effective. Ballistic stretching, where the individual bounces the muscle being stretched, has been shown to cause injury and should be avoided.

Because of my limited space, I won’t get into specific stretches, but I’ll summarize some stretching guidelines:

- Warm up for five minutes, minimum, prior to stretching. “Warming up” should include gentle joint rotations and some aerobic activity, like jogging in place, to get the blood flowing.
- The stretches should be tailored to the task you are stretching for, like your commonly performed job duties. Whether you spend most of your day standing, sitting, reaching or pulling will change which stretches will benefit you the most.
- Stretch regularly: two to three days per week minimum to achieve and maintain the benefits.
- Perform the stretches correctly: use static or PNF stretches, hold the stretch for 10 to 30 seconds, for three to four repetitions, and stretch both sides of your body, with emphasis on tight muscles.
- Do not stretch to the point of pain.
- Know how to stretch: either participate in a class or receive one-on-one instruction.

Prolonged sitting, standing or any repetitive movement can cause muscular tension and pain that affects our ideal alignment. By taking a quick break to stretch, your whole body can feel better. It is also helpful to stretch throughout the day, spending a minute or two stretching any particular area of the body that feels tense.

Chiara Fritzler is an OH&S officer with Alberta Employment and Immigration.

Next time: Is a lot of one movement a bad thing?

REFERENCES


Employment and Immigration Minister Thomas Lukaszuk spoke at the Partnerships in Injury Reduction Breakfast in Calgary on September 28, 2010.

Partnerships in Injury Reduction breakfast
Partnerships in Injury Reduction is a great example of how government, labour and industry can work together to improve occupational health and safety. That message was hammered home at the Partnerships in Injury Reduction Breakfast on September 28.

At the breakfast, held at Calgary’s McDougall Centre, Employment and Immigration Minister Thomas Lukaszuk recognized the contributions of the 75 Partners and Certifying Partners who attended. He encouraged them to keep up their work around implementing strong safety programs.

“Thanks to you, we can already demonstrate that the Certificate of Recognition program is of value—COR holders have a lower fatality rate and a shorter claims duration rate than non-COR holders,” said Lukaszuk. “We can already demonstrate that companies with CORs make consistent progress in improving their injury rates.”

In Alberta, the more than 8000 COR holders represent a significant percentage of the provincial payroll, he added.

Lukaszuk also spoke about the Alberta government’s plan for improving occupational health and safety accountability and transparency. Among the 10 initiatives announced over the summer was a plan to review the COR program.

“We need to demonstrate that having a COR is not a business licence. It’s a Certificate of Recognition—recognition that a strong safety system is in place,” he said. “That’s why I want to thank the Partners and Certifying Partners. It’s important that we reassure Albertans that when a serious incident happens, there’s a clear and fair process in place to review that employer’s COR.”

Details of the review are expected to be released in early 2011.

For an update on the Alberta government’s 10-point plan for achieving greater accountability for occupational health and safety, and for details on new initiatives, visit Employment and Immigration’s Newsroom at www.employment.alberta.ca.

Small Employer Certificate of Recognition review—survey results
A survey of over 3000 Small Employer Certificate of Recognition holders was completed in July. The response rate was almost 34 per cent. Results indicate that most SECOR-holders believe the program has improved their health and safety systems and helped them to better maintain safe and healthy workplaces. Responses also revealed that about 77 per cent of SECOR holders contract their services to a Prime Contractor and that these small employers are required to maintain an active SECOR in order to bid on work in their industry.

Many respondents also indicated that the amount of paperwork involved in the annual assessments can be overwhelming, but the survey confirmed that the vast majority of respondents would not consider using an external auditor in certification years and were satisfied with the self-assessment process in place.

The survey results have been distributed to the Certifying Partners, and they will be closely considered when the scheduled review of the SECOR program begins in the first quarter of 2011.

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/whs-partnerships/.
“An employer must ensure that...” is how most sections of the Occupational Health and Safety Code begin.

This opening is very important because, in Alberta, employers have the liberty to make all sorts of business decisions. In particular, they have the ability to be innovative in how they conduct their work. That is, they can be innovative as long as they provide workers with awareness of the hazards related to the work and ensure the protection of workers’ health and safety, including adequate training and supervision.

For example, section 8(2) of the OH&S Code states the following: “An employer must ensure that workers affected by the hazards identified in a hazard assessment report are informed of the hazards and of the methods used to control or eliminate the hazards.”

As an OH&S officer I have conducted hundreds of inspections. In many cases, inspections result in Orders written to employers. Much less frequently, but more often than desirable, inspections also result in Stop Work Orders that affect operations on the work site.

Although my work is fairly complex, the reasons for employers being given Orders or Stop Work Orders are normally very simple. They are related to the fact that “the employer failed to ensure that” its workers were working safely in compliance with a specific requirement of the OH&S Code.

The OH&S Act provides a clear definition of the obligations of employers. It states: “2(1) Every employer shall ensure, as far as it is reasonably practicable for the employer to do so, (a) the health and safety of (i) workers engaged in the work of that employer ...”

It is also important to remember that “Every worker shall co-operate with the worker's employer for the purposes of protecting the health and safety of ...” (OHS Act, section 2[2-b]).

So my view from the field is that employers can’t just assume that their workers are following the OH&S Code. Employers must ensure that workers do so.

Paulo Cerol is a proud OH&S officer in the Calgary region.
## WHEN A WORKPLACE INCIDENT OCCURS IN ALBERTA

### WHO DOES WHAT?

**by Jennifer Dagsvik, WCB-Alberta**

In the world of occupational health and safety, there are two players who work side by side to ensure Alberta has good incident prevention and good disability management and return-to-work support for injured workers. In this province, the responsibilities are split between Alberta Employment and Immigration and the Workers’ Compensation Board–Alberta.

Both organizations want to keep Albertans working and building a safe, healthy and strong Alberta. Here’s a chart to help explain how responsibilities are divided between AEI and WCB-Alberta.

*For more information on Occupational Health and Safety, visit [www.employment.alberta.ca](http://www.employment.alberta.ca). To report an injury to WCB, visit [www.wcb.ab.ca](http://www.wcb.ab.ca).*

### Workplace Incident

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<tr>
<th>Legislation:</th>
<th>Workplace Incident Investigations by AEI:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Occupational Health and Safety Act</td>
<td>- If the incident has posed an imminent threat to life or health, AEI may immediately impose a stop-work order.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If there is no imminent danger due to the incident, AEI may issue a compliance order signalling that a workplace hazard must be fixed.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>- Investigation involves gathering physical evidence, witness statements and employer documents, and determining OHS Act compliance.</td>
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<td>- If the investigation reveals that the OHS Act legislation was violated, the case will be forwarded to regulatory prosecutors (Alberta Justice).</td>
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<td>- Prosecutors then decide whether to lay charges.</td>
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<th>Legislation:</th>
<th>Incident reporting and investigation:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Workers’ Compensation Act</td>
<td>Reportable incidents to AEI:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Any workplace incident where an injured worker is hospitalized for 48 hours or more</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Any workplace fatality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- An unplanned fire or explosion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The upset of a crane, lift or hoist</td>
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### By the numbers:

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<tr>
<th>Workplace Incident Investigations by WCB-Alberta:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Workplace incidents that should be reported to WCB-Alberta:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Report any incident that leads to injury and occurs in an industry covered by WCB.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Workers should report as quickly as possible; however, a workplace injury can be reported up to two years after the incident.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Employers must report within 72 hours of learning an injury has occurred on their work site.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Incident reporting and investigation:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reportable injuries to WCB:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Injuries that cause (or are likely to cause) a worker to be off work beyond the day of injury</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Injuries that require modified work beyond the day of injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Injuries that require medical treatment beyond first aid (e.g., physical therapy, prescription medications, chiropractic treatments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Injuries that may result in a permanent disability (e.g., amputations, hearing loss)</td>
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You do not have to report incidents that require only first aid by a first aid provider (e.g., cuts, scrapes, scratches, minor burns or splinters).

Injuries or diseases considered work-related:

- Traumatic injuries (causing trauma to the body)
- Injuries caused by repetitive activities on the job
- Occupational diseases caused by exposure at the work site
- Re-injury—aggravation of an old workplace injury while at work

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<th>By the numbers:</th>
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<td>In 2009, AEI conducted approximately 14,000 work site inspections.</td>
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<th>By the numbers:</th>
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<td>In 2009, 140,198 new claims were reported to WCB-Alberta.</td>
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The ninth annual health and safety conference was held November 8 to 10 at the Shaw Conference Centre in Edmonton. The theme was Workplaces on the Move.

On the first day of the conference, after a warm welcome from Alberta Employment and Immigration Minister Thomas Lukaszu and WCB-Alberta CEO and President Guy Kerr, Michael “Pinball” Clemons gave the opening address. Clemons, who played 12 seasons for the Toronto Argonauts and was head coach for six years, started out asking, “Is everyone as excited as I am to be here?” He spoke passionately for the next hour and a half about the importance of individuals bringing the right attitude to their jobs and about the importance of teamwork. He asked the audience members to find the “sweet spot in their lives,” with their families, in their work and in the rest of their time.

“The advantage of life is to learn and to change, the challenge of life is to overcome it, the spice of life is to be a friend, and the secret of life is to dare,” Clemons said. He wanted the audience, made up of health and safety professionals, to know how important their jobs are to everyone in the workplace.

There were 662 registered delegates and 138 exhibit booths at the trade fair, for a total of over 950 individuals at the conference. Delegates came from as far away as Newfoundland and Louisiana.

Overall, there were approximately 24 sessions over the three days as well as one panel discussion.

Meg Soper, a self-described motivational comedian, concluded the conference with a humorous presentation about how to deal with difficult people in the workplace. She was also good at teasing audience members, including one man, Gerald, who had been married for 47 years. Meg asked him for some words of wisdom and he relayed an approach that has helped him over the years. His response—“Say what you mean and listen to what others say.”
At the conference, two resources—Driving for Work: Developing Safe Practices for Employers and Workers and Hazard Assessment for Driving eLearning Awareness Program—were discussed at one of the conference sessions (see employment.alberta.ca/SFW/12577.html). They are part of the Road Safety at Work Strategy from the Government of Alberta and were developed with several stakeholders from Alberta.

These resources include a best practice guide and an online tool aimed at preventing and reducing workplace fatalities that occur each year in Alberta as the result of motor vehicle incidents. Such accidents account for approximately one-third of total workplace fatalities.
Meg Soper, a comedian and operating room nurse, gave a light-hearted presentation on the last day of the conference about effective communication and conflict management. Photo above, Soper teased a member of the audience. Photo on right, she concluded the conference with a humorous rap performance.

Above: Charmaine Harris, in a session called “Courageous Dialogue,” led the audience in a communication exercise. Session topics also included cholesterol and heart health programs in the workplace; cold-water immersion, rescue and vehicle escape; and the OH&S investigation process.

COMMENTS FROM ONE PARTICIPANT

“I think the conference equips you to do a better job, and reinforces what you already know about safety,” says Wole, a safety advisor from Vancouver. “It was great to listen to the experts. I can now bring to the workplace what I have learned here.”

Wole was especially interested in the cholesterol and heart health workshop because of a friend’s recent death from a heart attack. “I had just seen him the day before, and the next day he died of a heart attack. He was only 43.”

Health issues being discussed in the workplace is helpful to employees and employers, says Wole. “It’s good when companies provide information on health to their employees. The earlier someone knows they have a health issue, the better it is for them. It helps everyone.”

www.hsconference.com

The 10th annual Alberta Health and Safety Conference and Trade Fair will be in Calgary on October 24 to 26, 2011.
Volunteer effort is crucial for thousands of organizations across Alberta. Our province’s culture and economy would look very different without the skill and enthusiasm of an estimated 1.4 million unpaid workers. Nearly 60 percent of Alberta non-profits have no paid staff, according to Volunteer Alberta. But free labour does not mean a free ride when it comes to workplace health and safety. Organizations must recognize that volunteers require the same protection as regular workers.

Is a volunteer an employee?
First of all, an organization must determine if a volunteer should be considered an employee. Daren Schwieger, an Alberta Occupational Health and Safety officer, says it’s usually a straightforward question. “In Alberta, there are three conditions that must to be met in order to establish a worker/employer relationship for volunteers,” he says. “First, an organization must request a volunteer’s participation. Second, the organization must dictate the volunteer’s activities. And third, the volunteer must provide a service to the organization. When these conditions are met, then volunteers are regarded as workers under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.”

Beverly Lafortune, vice-president of training and community services with St. John Ambulance Alberta Council, says her organization understands the demands of a largely volunteer organization.

“We certainly recognize the responsibility we have for our volunteers,” she says, “and we are committed to providing the same safe and healthy work environment for volunteers as we provide for our paid staff.”

Lafortune says the Alberta council, with some 600 volunteers and 1100 contract instructors, has a rigorous
health and safety program and has earned a provincial Certificate of Recognition.

**Match volunteers to the right task**

“Most of our volunteers work directly with the public,” says Lafortune. “Our first aid response teams, for example, work at events like hockey games and concerts, and they provide a hands-on service to people who are injured or suddenly ill. We recognize there is an aspect of liability in their role, and we address this by ensuring each volunteer has been selected carefully—and that includes screening for legal issues—as well as by confirming their certifications, and providing specialized training tailored to their particular function.”

“A volunteer is not doing it for the money; they’re doing it because they want to help the community. They might not interpret what they are doing as work and may not acknowledge the risks the way a paid person would.”

Lafortune says their volunteer selection process is geared toward finding the right people for the right tasks. “We interview each candidate to review their qualifications and to get an understanding of what they would like to be involved in,” she says. “This gives us some background on the person, and helps us see if they would be a match.”

Given the sensitive nature of the work and the responsibilities involved, if they’re not a match for the first aid response program, there are other volunteer roles within the organization that may be recommended. “However, there are times when individuals are not accepted because they do not meet the criteria for the specific program they’ve applied for and there isn’t an alternative available,” says Lafortune.

**Attitude and awareness**

One of the most important components of jobsite safety is worker attitude and awareness. This fact is not lost on Habitat for Humanity, a worldwide nonprofit with 72 Canadian affiliates, including 11 in Alberta. Using mostly volunteer labour, Habitat for Humanity has built more than 300,000 homes around the globe; a new home is signed over to its owner every 10 minutes.

Alfred Nikolai, CEO of Habitat for Humanity Edmonton, says for his organization safety is more important than building houses. “Safety is our primary objective, and that is what we tell our volunteer builders every day at the morning safety talk,” says Nikolai. “Then we tell them their second objective is to have fun. Then, finally, their third objective is to build a house.”

Nikolai stresses that work never begins before the group addresses the specific tasks of the day and any issues that might come up. “This is not negotiable,” he says. “Some of our volunteers are journeyman tradespeople, while some have never lifted a hammer, but they all get the same talk.”

**VOLUNTEER SAFETY TIPS**

- Orient volunteers to the workplace and company safety practices.
- Explain the nature of the tasks, potential hazards and provide written instructions (e.g., material safety data sheets).
- Provide and demonstrate personal safety equipment, and insist it is used.
- Assign tasks appropriate to each volunteer, based on that person’s knowledge, training and experience.
- Ensure each task is well defined, explained and demonstrated.
- Allow volunteers to choose an appropriate task for themselves.
- Correct unsafe working behaviours immediately.
- Encourage volunteers to ask questions and voice their concerns.
Training and supervision
While safety awareness and the proper attitude are crucial, training and supervision of volunteers cannot be overlooked. “Every volunteer takes part in a safety orientation,” says Nikolai, “then we organize our volunteers into groups of five to seven people, and each group has an experienced supervisor or crew leader.” The crew leader will find out each volunteer’s skill level and designate tasks based on that ability.

“Every volunteer takes part in a safety orientation,” says Nikolai, “then we organize our volunteers into groups of five to seven people, and each group has an experienced supervisor or crew leader.” The crew leader will find out each volunteer’s skill level and designate tasks based on that ability.

Nearly 60 per cent of Alberta non-profits have no paid staff.

“We don’t want to put a volunteer into a situation they are not comfortable with,” says Nikolai, “or give them a task where they could hurt themselves. If you’re new to the job, you stick with a hammer. If you’re an experienced hand, you can use the power tools you are competent with. We assign only the tasks that each person can perform safely.”

Nikolai’s organization has taken safety a couple of steps further. “I’m very proud that our Edmonton affiliate is perhaps the only one in Canada to have a full-time safety supervisor on staff,” he says, “and by the end of 2010, Edmonton will be the only Habitat affiliate to earn Certificate of Recognition status. For a charity to invest in safety at this level, to me that’s really saying something.” In addition, every volunteer with Habitat for Humanity Edmonton is covered by Workers’ Compensation Board-Alberta.

A shared responsibility
Workplace safety, even when workers are not being paid, is a shared responsibility; the worker and the employer each have a stake in the process. However, Alberta OH&S officer Cameron Mercer says in some cases volunteers don’t know they can stop unsafe work or refuse a task. “A volunteer is not doing it for the money; they’re doing it because they want to help the community,” says Mercer. “They might not interpret what they are doing as work and may not acknowledge the risks the way a paid person would.”

Therefore, Mercer says an important part of keeping volunteers safe is effective supervision. “Someone has to oversee what the volunteers are doing,” he says. “The jobs need to be based on the person’s experience and knowledge, and there has to be communication back and forth between the volunteer and the organization.”

The short duration—not the proper planning—of many volunteer tasks may be the primary reason a worker escapes injury. “Luck should not be the only safety program for a volunteer work site,” says Mercer. “There needs to be awareness of safety rules and regulations for all jobs, paid and unpaid. Training is available. Resources are available. You need to treat every volunteer function as a workplace function. The same rules apply to both. Whether you’re getting paid or not, an injury hurts as much either way.”

Wes Bellmore is a writer who lives in Edmonton, Alberta.

RESOURCES
WEB LINKS
employment.alberta.ca/documents/WHS/WHS-PUB-Li022.pdf
“Are Students and Volunteers Workers?” Workplace Health and Safety Bulletin
www.volunteeralberta.ab.ca/resources/faq.asp
www.volunteeralberta.ab.ca/consulting/services.asp
Volunteer Alberta—consulting services
www.charityvillage.com/CV/learn/index.asp
Charity Village Campus—online courses for volunteers and non-profits.
www.worksmartontario.gov.on.ca/scripts/default.asp?lang=en&contentID=6-1-2&mcategory=
A Guide for Sponsoring Organizations: How to Provide Young Volunteers with a Healthy and Safe Working Environment
Explains how organizations can address health and safety issues for teen volunteers.

IN THE ALBERTA GOVERNMENT LIBRARY
[For contact information, please see page 13.]

DVD/VHS
OFFICE SAFETY: IT’S A JUNGLE IN THERE (DVD 042)
Every year approximately 400,000 office workers get hurt. This program shows how working in an office is a lot like being in a jungle—the dangers are hidden and subtle. Topics discussed are the following: preventing injuries, controlling dangers and formulating emergency plans.

SAFETY AND YOU: AN INTRODUCTION (VC 0382)
This program discusses reasons to work safely, taking responsibility for your safety and the four cornerstones of safe behaviour: knowledge and information; hazard recognition; controlling hazards and leadership.
Habitat for Humanity volunteers work together on a house in Edmonton.
On March 31, 2007, a worker was pre-raking the concrete poured on the 12th floor of a construction site. The worker was walking backwards and fell through an uncovered floor opening on the 12th floor. The worker continued to fall through the uncovered floor opening on the 11th floor and landed on a partly covered floor opening on the 10th floor. The worker received serious injuries.

On September 13, 2010, Viper Concrete 2000 Limited pleaded guilty to one count, contrary to Section 7(2) of the Occupational Health and Safety Code, of failing to prepare a report of the results of a hazard assessment and the methods used to control or eliminate the hazards identified at the work site. Viper Concrete 2000 Limited received a total penalty of $85,750: a fine of $5000; a $750 victim fine surcharge; and a payment of $80,000 to the Women Building Futures Society.

In my last column (September 2010 issue) I discussed the guidelines for prosecution that are followed by Alberta Justice. These guidelines relate to the standards we apply in assessing the available evidence when considering or dealing with charges. It is also useful to understand how files get sent to Justice for review, and I will discuss this topic here.

When a reportable incident occurs an OH&S Lead Investigator goes to the scene to conduct an investigation. Contrary to what some might assume, the primary objective of the investigation is not to prove that someone did anything wrong, but rather to identify the root cause of the underlying incident.

The investigator takes statements from witnesses to the incident and from other individuals who have information regarding the work site and processes that were in place. Photographs are taken to capture the physical state of the scene. And various documents such as safety manuals, training records and manufacturer’s specifications are gathered. All of this information will help the Lead Investigator identify how the incident came to pass. It will help the investigator ensure that the site is safe for a return to work.

OH&S management will review the Lead Investigator’s report. The review will screen out certain matters, such as those where pure accident is involved or where the report could not readily identify a failure to comply with the legislation.

Files are sent to Alberta Justice only in cases where the OH&S investigation raises issues regarding possible deficiencies in steps that could or should have been taken to protect workers. Justice will then review the file in accordance with our guidelines for prosecution.

Brian Caruk is Acting Chief Crown Prosecutor with Regulatory Prosecutions, Alberta Justice.
OCCUPATIONAL FATALITIES
Investigated in Alberta

July 22 to November 18, 2010

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, disease or heart attack fatalities. In many cases, investigation into these fatalities is continuing. Final investigation reports are filed at the Alberta Government Library site and can be reviewed there or at employment.alberta.ca/whs-fatalities.

A 55-year-old male worker was in the driver’s seat of a semi truck attempting to winch a pressure tank trailer onto the truck’s flat bed when the tail chain broke. The winch line and hook were thrown through the truck cab’s rear window, striking the worker on the head.

A 42-year-old male worker was run over when a co-worker was backing up a pickup truck to a gasoline pump.

A 71-year-old male worker was standing on a ladder and fell off sustaining a fatal head injury. The fall may have been a result of a medical condition.

A 58-year-old male worker was operating a knuckle boom working between the picker truck and the outrigger on the truck. The knuckle boom released, trapping and crushing the operator’s head between the knuckle boom and the truck.

A 74-year-old male was fatally injured when a metal cylinder attached to a fuel tank blew off while a co-worker was using a cutting torch to cut into the fuel tank.

A 28-year-old male worker was hit on the head by a piece of equipment.

A 48-year-old male worker, who was employed as a rig manager, left a truck yard and was found dead in his rolled vehicle.

A 25-year-old male worker was inside a zoom boom forklift trying to move it off a trailer. The worker jumped from the machine as it was sliding off the truck and was crushed underneath the falling machine.

A 21-year-old male worker was installing water and sewer lines when he was crushed against the wall of an excavation by a load suspended from the boom of an excavator.


If you’re interested in sharing opinions or comments about workplace health and safety issues, please contact the magazine’s editor through the OHS Contact Centre, 1-866-415-8690 (or 780-415-8690, if you are in the Edmonton area), or e-mail whs@gov.ab.ca.
Distracted Driving Legislation

Highlights

- Restricts drivers from:
  - using hand-held cell phones
  - texting or e-mailing
  - using electronic devices like laptop computers, video games, cameras, video entertainment displays and programming portable audio players (e.g., MP3 players)
  - entering information on GPS units
  - reading printed materials in the vehicle
  - writing, printing or sketching; and
  - personal grooming

- Complements the current driving without due care and attention legislation

- Applies to all vehicles as defined by the Traffic Safety Act, including bicycles

- Applies to all roads in both urban and rural areas of the province

The distracted driving law could be in effect by the middle of 2011, with an anticipated grace period, and the proposed fine for this offence is $172.

In the coming months, the province will launch a public education and awareness campaign to help Albertans understand the details of the legislation.

Visit [www.transportation.alberta.ca](http://www.transportation.alberta.ca) for more information on Alberta’s new distracted driving legislation.