

THE **safety mosaic**

Health & Safety for the Way You Work
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Learning from Experience

*TDL Franchisees Share Their Insights
on Keeping Employees Healthy and Safe*



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THE safety mosaic

WINTER 2008/09

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It's been a year none of us will forget—in every industry and business, around the world and right here at home.

The rapidly evolving news on the global market downturn has combined with more long-standing pressures to make change and transformation the daily expectation.

Now, more than ever, it's important for businesses to focus on fundamentals that have a positive impact on productivity and

cost-savings. An effective health and safety program is a giant step in that direction.

Ontario statistics show that while we've made progress in past years, much more remains to be done. The cost of days lost to injury and illness continues to escalate, creating a financial and emotional burden for workers, industry and society alike.

The WSIB is addressing this challenge courageously in its 2008-2012 *Road to Zero* strategy, which sets out a framework to achieve zero injuries, illnesses and fatalities in Ontario. Every partner in Ontario's prevention system has a role to play.

Your focus as a business must include a prevention program that reduces illnesses and injuries in your workplace, by a minimum of seven per cent a year, in order to maintain the status quo on the annual premiums you currently pay. It's an achievable goal, as successful companies demonstrate year after year.

The WSIB has also redesigned the way services are delivered to your firm. The new model is being implemented in phases, and is designed to help businesses drive down "persistence." See page 5 for more info.

Also, Ontario's health and safety service associations, including OSSA, will soon look different. In rapidly changing times, a well developed and proactive response to Ontario's economy and its future must be our reality, too. In 2009, we will be consolidating from 12 health and safety organizations to four, pushing resources to the front line and streamlining our support services so that we can reach more of you. Our commitment is to help you drive down lost-time incidents, manage risk, and make health and safety a "habit" in your workplace. More on this in our next edition of *The Safety Mosaic*.

We are excited and energized about the positive and tangible steps we are taking toward "zero," and know that you share our passion for a healthier, safer Ontario. It is this greater good that will energize us all through a year of new challenges and aspirations.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *The Safety Mosaic*, and we wish you a safe, happy and healthy new year.

President and CEO

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Are You Ready for the MOL's Forklift Blitz?

In February 2009, the Ministry of Labour (MOL) will begin an inspection blitz for forklift safety. And not without reason. According to WSIB statistics, almost 900 workers are seriously injured annually by mobile equipment, resulting in an average of 29 lost workdays. The blitz will cover everything from low lift-powered pallet trucks to walkie stackers, reach trucks, order pickers and indoor and outdoor counter-balanced equipment.

Inspectors will look for evidence that:

- Lift truck operators are adequately trained
- Supervisors are trained and competent to supervise forklift operations
- Appropriate safety equipment is in use and in good working order
- Manufacturers' maintenance and inspection procedures are rigorously followed

Don't rely on training programs that consist of nothing more than a light touch. And don't wait for MOL inspectors to scrutinize your forklift operations either. Talk to the experts. OSSA has the experience and expertise to:

- Perform a hazard check
- Provide a confidential assessment of your records
- Help you assess your performance against the *Health and Safety Act* and CSA standards



For more information, call OSSA at 1-888-478-6772 or visit www.ossa.com

We'll be there. Will you? <<<<<

If you've got questions on health and safety, here are a few opportunities to get some answers. OSSA will be an active participant at some important events taking place during the first four months of 2009. We will showcase our health and safety expertise and we're hoping you'll drop by our booth to chat with an OSSA Consultant.

Event	Venue	Date	OSSA's participation	Where to register
CRFA Show	Direct Energy Centre, Toronto	March 8-10	Trade show exhibitor	www.crfa.ca/tradeshows/crfashow
Retail Human Resources Conference	Toronto Congress Centre, Toronto	April 1	Trade show exhibitor	www.retailcouncil.org
Health & Safety Canada 2009	Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Toronto	April 20-22	Trade show exhibitor	www.iapa.ca



BREAKING NEWS: WSIB Changing How it Does Business

The WSIB's five-year strategic plan, "The Road to Zero," requires workplaces to reduce their injury rates by seven per cent for each of the next five years, just to break even on their premium rates.

The WSIB is changing how it does business to help you achieve those numbers. Here's what you need to know:

New service delivery model

In 2009, you'll see a "triage" approach to service. Think of a hospital emergency ward, where an intake co-ordinator assesses patients' needs and streams them to the appropriate service or specialist. Firms with an injured worker will go through a similar process.

WSIB specialists will collaborate with workplaces to determine, among other things, the eligibility of a claim, a customized plan to help the injured employee return to work, and medical/healthcare interventions that will help injured workers recover.

THE GOAL: to help businesses drive down "persistence"—the proportion of your organization's lost-time days this year that occurred from health and safety incidents as compared with previous years.

Streamlining the prevention system

Today, 14 WSIB-designated health and safety associations provide prevention services to Ontario's various business sectors. The Ossa, for example, focuses on service sector organizations. In 2009, this part of Ontario's prevention system will become smaller and better integrated, with fewer, distinct associations and a renewed focus on workers and workplaces.

THE GOAL: to align our efforts in a way that will allow us to reach more of you, and help you drive down lost-time incidents and manage risk.

What's driving these changes?

On average, every week in Ontario:

- Two people die from a workplace incident
- Five people acquire an occupational disease
- 1,600 injuries cause lost time from work

The bottom line

Everything—from the WSIB's new service delivery model, to Workwell, to incentive programs such as New Experimental Experience Rating (NEER), to how the health and safety associations will be organized—will be aligned to help workplaces achieve the new performance standards (annual seven per cent reduction in injuries), and return injured employees to work as quickly as possible.

Ossa Launches SafeWork



If you're a medium-sized or small business, you might be interested to know that the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (WSIB) has drawn up a list of more than 1,200 firms slated for Workwell audits this year, 400 of which are from the service sector. And this year there are more small businesses appearing on the list than usual.

But there is hope for firms that believe their health and safety performance could use a boost. Access to SafeWork, Ossa's new subscription-based Web site for medium and small businesses, is now available for purchase.

SafeWork guides businesses through a logical six-step health and safety program covering: legal requirements; health and safety policy; establishing a health and safety committee or representative; hazard training; preventing hazards; and maintaining a health and safety system.

Priced at \$349 for the first year's subscription, SafeWork includes more than 135 health and safety resource elements, based on Ossa's Six Step Guide to Health and Safety.

Subscribers can easily access SafeWork online, and can download a wide range of training materials, presentations and templates designed to help build their own workplace health and safety program. Subscriptions to SafeWork include Ossa's Occupational Health and Safety Starter Kit, and included in the online resources are 14 Ossa Hazard Training Modules that meet all the Certification Part II hazard training requirements—a value of more than \$500.



More information on these changes will be available in upcoming editions of *The Safety Mosaic*. For additional information or if you have questions, contact Ossa at 1-888-478-6772.



To order SafeWork, call Ossa at 1-888-478-6772 or visit www.ossa.com/content/services/safework.cfm

Early and Safe Return to Work

Helping injured workers return to the job in a safe and timely fashion is an important aspect of any health and safety program

By Jason Hagerman

Ontario companies are paying more than ever for their insurance premiums despite encouraging news that the number of workplace injury claims in Ontario has dropped. Failure to get employees back to work in a timely manner is to blame. As such, employers need to develop an approach aimed at Early and Safe Return to Work (ESRTW).

ESRTW is an essential business practice that can be easily implemented. And with benefits from financial gains on both ends to increased employee loyalty and morale, it is one of the most prudent practices an employer can engage in.

This is not simply returning the employee to their job as soon as is physically possible. As an employer, it is important to attempt to provide suitable work until the worker can return to their previous post. This interim work must be within the worker's functional physical capabilities, must restore the worker's pre-injury earnings as closely as possible, and the worker must have the required skills (or be able to receive training).

The work must also be meaningful. According to findings released by the *Toronto Star*, some companies have given workers degrading temporary jobs. A tradesperson, for example, working in a meat packing plant was injured, and was offered temporary employment watching trucks drive in and out of the warehouse.

Figures obtained through the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) show the longer an employee remains absent from the job, the less likely they are to return at all.

By promoting ESRTW, the employer is not only working to retain trained and experienced workers, but is also maintaining worker morale while keeping insurance



premiums low and limiting wasted work hours. Further, ESRTW actually helps the recovery process, benefiting the employee both mentally and physically.

Employers need to ensure workers understand the importance of a return to work program. The employee and employer must work together and maintain an open line of communication to ensure the most efficient return to work, while the WSIB monitors the claim to ensure that all proper steps are taken, and all safety measures are observed.

The WSIB recommends creating return to work plans—highly detailed plans developed by the worker and employer that take into account medical and functional ability information from the health provider. This serves as a communication outline, and creates a timeline by which both parties can plan for full return to work.

The WSIB says the details of these plans should include goals, which can be

set out in a week-to-week model, and the actions required to reach these goals, as well as the injured worker's projected or ongoing healthcare needs. A form could be created and updated every week, or every day, to track the improving abilities of the worker, giving both the employer and employee an accurate representation of the worker's status. This can help in moving the worker to higher functioning jobs, perhaps bringing them closer to their previous pay.

Getting started with an ESRTW program can be intimidating, which is why the WSIB offers assistance to employers.

The Prevention Division of the WSIB has two sets of specialists who deal with ESRTW. Return to Work Specialists handle individual claims by working with the injured worker. Disability Prevention Specialists (DPS), on the other hand, work with employers to help them establish an effective program. The DPS would be able to articulate the guiding principles behind appropriate “modified duties.”

An effective return to work program may require an investment initially, but it is one that will quickly pay for itself as the length of claims become shorter.

A company could, for example, spend \$5,000 to develop and launch an ESRTW program and make that money back on its first two claims. As insurance premiums drop, this money can then be redirected into a long-term prevention strategy, which would result in substantial savings. In times when the economy is increasingly unstable, simple adjustments to business practices, such as reevaluating the current ESRTW system, can make all the difference. ▲



For more information, visit the WSIB's ESRTW site at www.wsib.on.ca/wsib/wsibsite.nsf/public/employersESRW

Workplace Bullying a Growing Health and Safety Concern

By Jason Hagerman

Be it exclusion from social outings or belittling of an employee's performance, bullying is an underappreciated problem found throughout Canada's workplaces.

A recent study released by M. Sandy Hershcovis of the University of Manitoba, and Julian Barling of Queens University, looked at the effect of bullying on job satisfaction; relationships with co-workers and supervisors; worker stress, anger and anxiety levels; mental and physical health; job turnover; and emotional ties to work in relation to both sexual harassment and workplace aggression. They arrived at some unexpected conclusions.

To the researchers' surprise, while the impact of sexual harassment remained "significant across the board," according to Hershcovis, bullying is more prevalent and demoralizing than any other workplace encounter. Employers should treat workplace bullying with the same gravity as sexual harassment, workplace violence or any other health and safety issue, experts say.

Bullying does not necessarily come in the form of schoolyard pushing and shoving. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety says spreading rumours or gossip, intimidation or social isolation, withholding information or purposefully giving



inaccurate information, assigning unreasonable duties, tampering with personal belongings or making blatantly offensive jokes, all qualify as bullying.

According to the study, employees who experienced bullying were more likely to quit their jobs, report lower levels of well-being, be less satisfied with their jobs and have less satisfying relationships with their bosses, than employees who were sexually harassed.

Bullied employees also reported more job stress and higher levels of anger and anxiety.

The report was based on a total of 128 samples of people aged 18 to 65 and working in organizations with five to 20,000 employees.

“Bullying can and does devastate the individual,” says Chris Hinkle, President of Firm Foundations, an organization aimed at making the workplace safer. “It is a slow process of breaking down the individual mentally, which in turn breaks down the individual’s health. It can lead to serious events such as heart attacks and suicide. It also affects relationships both inside and outside the workplace.”

What may come as a surprise is that bullying does not tend to affect short-term individual productivity in a negative way.

“More often than not you will find that people being bullied will respond very well in their productivity,” says Gerry Smith, Vice-president of Organizational Health and Training for Shepell.fgi, health and productivity specialists. “They will work harder, they’ll work longer. They feel if they don’t, they’re going to get bullied even more. You’ll find in a bullied environment when, for example, people are working under a [tyrannical] boss, the people are very productive and efficient, but they go home at night stressed beyond belief.”

The long-term effects on an employee, however, can have a resounding effect on the business.

According to Hinkle, a workplace driven to efficiency by this sort of intimidation experiences high turnover and increased absenteeism.

Information gathered from Hershovis’ study indicates that the largest percentage of incidents occur between employees, followed by customers as the aggressor and lastly, involving supervisors.

Efforts to prevent bullying in the workplace should include steps to improve relationships among co-workers. While supervisor-related bullying is less prevalent, it is important for an organization to remain vigilant in training these individuals as well.

“Some people are in a natural position of authority,” says Smith. “When these people take part in bullying, it is often because of the personality characteristics of certain people, and a lack of training.

Dealing with Bullies

Here are some general tips for dealing with workplace bullying:

- Encourage everyone at the workplace to act toward others in a respectful and professional manner.
- Have a workplace policy in place that includes a reporting system.
- Educate everyone that bullying is a serious matter.
- Try to work out solutions before the situation gets serious or out of control.
- Educate everyone about what is considered bullying and whom they can go to for help.
- Treat all complaints seriously and deal with complaints promptly and confidentially.
- Train supervisors and managers in how to deal with complaints and potential situations. Encourage them to address situations promptly whether or not a formal complaint has been filed.
- Have an impartial third party help with the resolution, if necessary.

Source: Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

If a person with these characteristics perceives themselves to be in a position of superiority, it is likely they will go on a targeted campaign of bullying people they see to be under their control.”

No matter who the bully is, the actions are intentional.

“Bullying is a conscious act. The bully knows what they are doing and targets the victim,” says Hinkle.

Smith agrees, “Bullies just don’t give a damn. They believe they are untouchable. In many circumstances they are. The organization supports the behaviour by not intervening and not correcting behaviours.”

One reason employers allow the destructive behaviour to continue is that the offender is not seen as a bully, but rather a person who gets results. Often, people who are being bullied do not know where to turn.

“They feel that nobody will protect them. Worst of all, they see colleagues not sticking up for them,” says Smith. “They see friends allowing the behaviour to happen and walking away without offering support.”

Finally, this activity continues because, until recently, it has not been specifically addressed by any law.

As of May 2008, the Canada Labour Code holds employers responsible for behaviours that contribute to physical violence, including bullying, says Hinkle. “Provincial laws are currently being reviewed, and changes are certainly coming.”

Because bullying can contribute to creating a toxic work environment, employers need to treat it as seriously as any other workplace-unfriendly act. Though it is not currently against the law, employers should treat bullying as though it is, by developing strict guidelines and providing easily accessible outlets for reporting it.

“I firmly believe the organization has to tackle it systemically, and not tolerate any kind of abuse or aggressive behaviour,” says Smith. “If they willfully neglect to do that these days, they will find themselves in a precarious situation.” ▲



Learning from Experience

TDL Franchisees Share Their Insights

By Heidi Croot



Rob and Angela (right) Denstedt worked with their entire team of employees to design an effective health and safety system.

In the fall edition of *The Safety Mosaic*, we looked at how the health and safety support that TDL offers its Tim Hortons stores, shatters three myths that get in the way of other parent companies achieving similar success with their franchisees (check out “Newsletters” at www.ossa.com).

In this edition, *The Safety Mosaic* extends its reach to the front lines—to two high-achieving Tim Hortons franchisees willing to share some of the competitive approaches that contribute to their ability to keep employees healthy and safe.

Let’s take a look at the lessons they’ve learned.

Find out what you don’t know

For employers just merging onto the road to zero injuries and illnesses, it’s inspiring to know that even star performers started

in the slow lane. “We were on a Workwell list when I first got involved with OSSA,” says Sonya Boles, an 18-year veteran of the company, who has served as general manager of six Tim Hortons stores in London since 2001. “We asked for a benchmark audit, and I was blown away by a lot of what we learned. For example, we used to think a doctor’s note meant an injured employee could just take time off. It didn’t take me long to implement the proper forms and offer modified duties to get the employee back on the job. Working closely with OSSA and having them do a seminar gave us a better understanding of health and safety procedures, which we were then able to communicate to our staff and management team.”

Cultivate patience

Designing an effective health and safety system takes time and patience. “I wish we could fix everything right away, but then you’re all over the place and you lose what you want your people to practice and learn,” says Angela Denstedt, who has operated one Tim Hortons store in Gananoque since June 1997, as well as a second store in Kingston since September 2008 with her husband, Rob. “Our communication needed work, so we focused on that for six months. Then we went on to the next thing and focused on that. It’s constantly evolving.”

Denstedt recently took part in a seminar with TDL and OSSA, and found she was still picking up useful tips, for example on ladder safety. On the day after the seminar, she bought safety vests for her staff.

Boles tells a similar story. “It took us two years, with help, to get our program up and running,” she says. “I had no idea where to start, but it has all fallen into place. I look back and it was all worth it. Now we’re into customizing for our stores.”



Connect the dots for staff

People are motivated to comply when they feel heard, and when they understand why something needs to be done. “We believe in a happy workplace,” says Boles, “and part of that is our open door policy. Employees know they can bring any kind of health and safety issue to their managers without reprisals, and some-

Attention students of “change management”

Health and safety leaders looking for performance improvements will be intrigued to know that many of the mindsets and initiatives fostered at the Tim Hortons stores in Gananoque and London, reflect the eight steps to successful change developed by leadership and change guru John Kotter, award-winning author of many bestselling business books. For more information, Google “John Kotter eight steps,” or visit www.johnkotter.com.

thing will be done about it. We also explain the policies we put in place so staff know why they are necessary.”

One of the first things Denstedt did as a new owner was design an activities schedule, or “zone chart,” for every job position, to help employees understand their responsibilities. She is a firm believer in cross-training and asks staff to be flexible about shifts and positions. “Yes, I’m the boss,” she says, “but I don’t see myself as above my staff. Our weekly checklist is for everybody, and believe me, staff participate. When they can catch someone doing something wrong, especially management, they enjoy that. If you can give it out, you should be able to take it!”



Make it a habit

Embedding preventive strategies in everyday business practices is a low-cost strategy that works. Denstedt includes health and safety in her store's newsletters, zone charts, rewards and incentives, verbal and written corrective policies, and performance evaluations. "We know that if we focus on health and safety activities every day, it will become a habit."

Accept help

Both Denstedt and Boles take advantage of the corporate program offered by TDL, and, as Denstedt says, "go beyond" by customizing the data, templates and resources to meet the unique needs of the store. And both accept plenty of support and counsel from OSSA.

"Our partners are looking out for us and our employees," says Boles. "My advice to new owners is: take the help that is out there."

Adds Denstedt: "A group of us [franchise owners] hang together because we went through training together. We share ideas and help each other."

Boles adds, "If I didn't get the help I've had from others, then we wouldn't be where we are today. And if I can help others, I will." ▲

Make health and safety a democracy

"Saturation certification"—where employers choose to provide health and safety certification to more than the minimum number of employees required by law—is gaining popularity with leaders interested in achieving superior performance. Denstedt is ahead of this curve. She is proud of the fact that all her key people, including managers, supervisors, assistants, trainers, and even some bakers, are certified.

"At first it was hard to get people to join our health and safety committee," she says. "But as we gave people the information they needed, asked them to help evolve our plan, developed an incentive program for managers with OSSA's help, and promoted health and safety as part of our daily focus, our committee grew to 10 or 15 people."

For a reading on the saturation factor in Boles' stores, all you have to do is listen. "No matter which store you're in," says Boles, "you'll hear staff say, 'behind you,' 'beside you' or 'coming through'—for example, when they're carrying something hot out of the kitchen. We joke that you can hear them down the street."

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Retail and wholesale operations depend on forklift trucks to lift and transport goods around their premises. It is imperative for service sector businesses to pay special attention to forklift safety because of the hazards it presents.

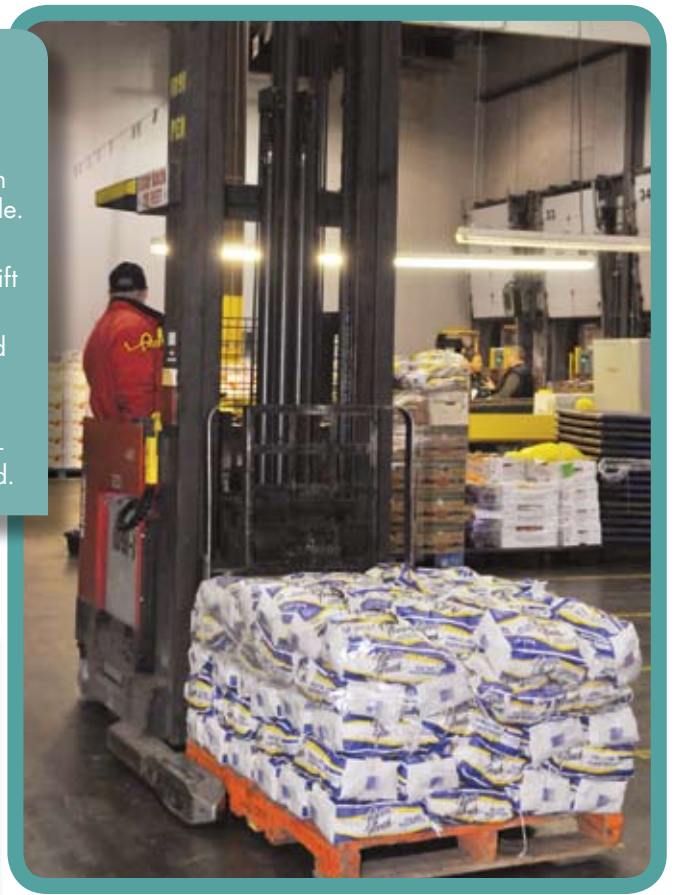
DRIVE SAFE. EVERY TIME

- Keep hands, arms, head, feet and legs inside the forklift truck at all times.
- Travel with forks as close as possible to the floor and tilted back.
- Obey posted traffic signs. Decrease speed at all corners, sound horn and watch the swing of both the rear of the lift truck and the load.
- Maintain eye contact with other drivers. Use hand gestures to acknowledge their presence.
- Look out for oil spots, wet spots, loose objects, holes, rough surfaces, people and vehicles on the floor or roadway.



KNOW YOUR LOAD

- Know the recommended load limit of the forklift and the capacity of the fork and never exceed these limits.
- Ensure the load doesn't block your vision. Always look in the direction of travel. Travel in reverse whenever possible.
- Position the load according to the recommended load centre and keep it close to the front wheels to keep the lift truck stable.
- Raise or lower the fork only when the lift truck is stopped and braked.
- Stay on the forklift when the load is in a raised position and do not allow anyone to stand or walk under the elevated part of the forklift, whether it's loaded or unloaded.



CONDUCTING FORKLIFT INSPECTIONS

Refer to the manufacturer's inspection checklist before operating a forklift. Here are a few important safety tips to consider:

Visual inspection of the lift truck

- Fire extinguisher present, and charged
- All fluid levels (oil, fuel, radiator water)
- Battery fully charged, battery plug connections not loose, worn or dirty
- Bolts, nuts, guards or chains not damaged, missing or loose

Operational pre-use inspection

- Horn working and loud enough to be heard in working environment
- Floor brake, parking brake, dead man seat brake, clutch and gearshift
- All lights and gauges operational on dash control panel
- Lift mechanism, tilt mechanism



CHECK BLIND SPOTS

- Strategically placed mirrors give lift truck drivers a view of pedestrians or other lift trucks operating in other aisles.
- Make visual checks of blind spots wherever mirrors are not present.



Making the Service Sector Healthy and Safe

OSSA Partners with Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association

By Jason Hagerman

Inside information, access to resources and health and safety specialists: The Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association (ORHMA) gains much from its decade-long partnership with the Ontario Service Safety Alliance (OSSA). The OSSA also benefits, gaining credibility and clients in the service industry through the collaboration.

According to Michelle Saunders, Manager of Government Relations at the ORHMA, which represents more than 11,000 businesses at both the municipal and provincial levels of government and provides them with cost savings programs, the relationship began as a simple one based on health and safety information exchange, but has since grown.

For example, the Ministry of Labour (MOL) recently launched a series of blitz visits focused on addressing slips, trips and falls in the service sector, some of the most prevalent forms of worker injury in the service sector.

“[MOL inspectors] would show up at a workplace unannounced—at workplaces that they thought had exposure to a particular hazard,” says John Aird, Manager of Strategic Partnerships and Special Projects at OSSA.

“Many hospitality operators are intimidated by MOL and WSIB inspectors,” says Saunders, “and simply aren’t aware of their rights and responsibilities, as well as the things they can do to prepare for an inspection and to make it go smoothly.”

The OSSA brought information concerning how to prepare for these visits, to the ORHMA, whose members employ more young workers than any other sector.

The ministry knows this particular sector is prone to these kinds of accidents, says Aird, and is therefore more likely to



be visited by the MOL than others.

“How do I stock shelves... How do I get a whole tray of meals out to people at the table?” asks Aird. “There’s water, grease, heat sources, knives. The nature of the work exposes people to these hazards.”

The OSSA knew when these visits were going to begin, and developed an article to be printed in the ORHMA’s member newsletter, *Insider*, letting members know that the MOL would be conducting these visits. The article provided outlets for further information, and acted as a launch point for businesses to start addressing slip and fall concerns.

“We said, ‘what you need to do before the MOL shows up is go through the attached checklist, assess your exposure, what the prevalence of this hazard is in your workplace, and what are you doing about it. If you find you don’t have all the

right controls and systems in place, you need to develop a plan,’” explains Aird.

Through its work with the ORHMA, the OSSA has gained access to members in the industry, which means access to organizations that may have otherwise been unaware of the OSSA.

“How do you catch the attention of a busy business owner? You contact them through their industry association,” says Aird.

“OSSA has benefitted from increased recognition throughout the industry,” says Saunders. “And an endorsement from Canada’s largest provincial hospitality industry association.”

Most importantly, Aird believes the OSSA benefits because the partnership helps the association achieve its goal of making the service sector healthy and safe.

“Our common goal is to help operators in the hospitality industry access the resources they need so they can make improvements to their health and safety practices, and reduce accident rates which ultimately results in reduced WSIB costs,” says Saunders.

Members of the ORHMA, in turn, look to their association because it provides value in many ways. The ORHMA is the voice of the industry, speaking to the government and providing invaluable information related to running a business in the sector. It also conveys to its members the business advantage of focusing on health and safety.

“ORHMA members are looking for assistance and value to help them be more successful,” says Aird. “With the help of ORHMA, we provide the tools.” ▲

 To find out more about purchasing health and safety resource binders, call OSSA’s client services line at 1-888-478-OSSA.

Young Worker Safety with James Burgie

In his first week on the job, working in the shipping and receiving department of a major retailer, James Burgie was asked to move a heavily loaded skid with the assistance of an electric jack. He was given a bare-bones training session after mentioning he was not familiar with the machinery. A few minutes later he was flying toward the loading dock of the warehouse. The supervisor had neglected to mention one thing: the brakes. Burgie had no idea how to stop. Within seconds he was dangling off the edge of the shipping platform, five feet above the ground with a few hundred pounds of shipping material held precariously above his head.

The young worker came out of the situation unscathed, but with a story demonstrating to any supervisor that a little complacency can go a long way toward causing an injury at work.

According to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), young workers often lack the experience to recognize and avoid hazards, making them particularly vulnerable to illness and injury on the job. Since the close call in the warehouse, 20-year-old Burgie has been fortunate enough to find himself in safety-conscious company, and feels that employers generally put a great deal of energy into health and safety training.

Burgie is currently in his third year as a snowboard instructor at Sunshine Village Resort in Alberta and has never been injured on the job.

“The training we receive is a big part of that, I think,” he says. “We are given a whole run-through of the mountain, and safe tactics to use in order to avoid unsafe environments,” he says. “The veteran instructors really do look out for the new,



James Burgie is a snowboard instructor at Sunshine Village Resort in Alberta. He has never been injured on the job.

young staff. I have always felt secure and comfortable with my knowledge about the resort and surrounding responsibilities.”

Likewise, even while employed in more standard service-sector jobs (which make up the vast majority of young worker jobs), Burgie has consistently worked under health and safety-conscious managers.

He has spent some summers working at a grocery store, and others in the pro shop at a golf course. In both situations, the management focused on hands-on health and safety training that was both relevant and practical.

“I always remembered that the garbage and cardboard compactors were something you would use only if you knew how to,” says Burgie of the grocery store. “They made sure that we knew how to use them and that we knew how to show someone else proper use as well.”

Workers were also shown how to properly stack heavier products and how to handle potentially hazardous materials.

Although the work he did at the golf

course was not, in his opinion, hazardous, Burgie found the training offered there to be comprehensive as well. Workers were shown how to safely traverse the course during active hours, keeping an eye on golfers and staying clear of errant balls. He was also told about the importance of hand washing, as the job required extensive money handling.

Now, working his first full-time job, Burgie sees greater emphasis being put on health and safety.

“This is the first full-time job I’ve had, so I am not sure if they are more interested in health and safety because I am a full-time employee or because they just have an interest in health and safety or because of the nature of the job,” says Burgie.

When a young worker feels safe in an environment where speed and unpredictable conditions are commonplace, it says a lot about the prudent health and safety practices that Sunshine Village has adopted, and that is how it should be across the board. ▲

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