

# THE safety mosaic

connecting people with health and safety news

## Removing the Roadblocks to Workplace Health and Safety

*Even though employers often recognize the importance of health and safety training, instilling it into the corporate culture can be a daunting challenge. How can companies pave the way to a safer workplace?*



Organizations that have defined and well-articulated core values and a mission that incorporates a health and safety vision are much more likely to succeed at their health and safety efforts than those who don't. "If you make health and safety a separate element, rather than

part of your corporate culture, it is likely to be dropped or forgotten over time," says Bill Boyle, Program Director, Consulting Services, OSSA. "Making it part of your business philosophy makes it easier to integrate into the fabric of your business."

### Demonstrating Leadership and Commitment

The ultimate success of a health and safety system hinges on leadership. Companies that demonstrate commitment from the top, by determining policy direction and providing support through active participation, set the foundation for a strong and meaningful health and safety program.

Famz Foods is a franchise owner of thirteen Swiss Chalet and Harvey's locations across Ontario. When the company received notification that a Workwell audit would take place at seven of its stores, the organization's management team knew that strong commitment from the top was necessary to ensure a positive result. In the

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middle of a busy holiday season, Famz Foods made time to conduct “mock” audits at each of these sites, with the goal of determining potential areas for improvement. With the assistance of the OSSA, the organization developed training for specific areas of its business, including personalized health and safety manuals. “What we discovered from this intensive process,” says Tom Uz, V.P. of Operations, Famz Foods, “was that as management brought safety into focus, our employees grew more motivated as well.” Says Sheila Goodwin, OSSA consultant, “Famz Foods really was committed to not only passing the Workwell audit – which they did – but to improving health and safety in the workplace. I think they’re a stronger organization because of that commitment.”

## Developing the Right Attitude

The Ontario Marina Operators Association (OMOA) demonstrated the right attitude towards health and safety by developing a Best Practices document, designed to prevent employee drownings. The document grew out of a ruling this past summer that marina employees working near water must wear life jackets. “Our marinas believe strongly that safety should come first,” says Bruce MacKenzie of the OMOA. “But the reality is, lifejackets can be hot, cumbersome and a potential tangling hazard for employees getting on and off boats.” The OMOA received permission to develop an equivalent practice to the Industrial Regulation, one that “we feel goes above and beyond merely handing out a personal floatation device to each employee,” says Bruce. The Best Practices document outlines required training of new and existing staff in safe vessel docking procedures, fueling operations, emergency procedures, rescue equipment, employer responsibilities, guidelines and work practices. “OMOA will use this document as a proactive measure, one that ensures that they are not only meeting their obligation – but exceeding it,” says Gerald Robinson, OSSA Client Development Manager. “When the Ministry of Labour comes to visit, they’ll be ready.”

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## Maintaining the Lines of Communication

By letting staff know that health and safety is a priority, and keeping the lines of communication open, everyone can share the responsibility for a program’s success.

When Grand & Toy received orders from the Ministry of Labour to have WHMIS training completed for its new warehouse in six weeks time, the organization knew it had to pull its resources together — and fast. Flexibility was needed as the warehouse operated both day and night shifts. At the same time, management and staff had to share responsibility for ensuring the training was done in time. Working with the OSSA, Grand & Toy developed a WHMIS program that was specific to the warehouse environment, and could be delivered during off-hours and weekends. “The Grand & Toy staff and management really pulled together as a team,” says Bill McMurray, OSSA Client

Development Manager. “The cooperation shown by management and staff was really encouraging” Gerard Betsch, Manager of Health and Safety for Grand & Toy adds, “This training not only established a strong value set for health and safety in our organization, it acted as a springboard for other initiatives we are in the process of developing.”

## Developing Partnerships

“Cooperation and cohesiveness is extremely important in the live theatre business,” says Cheryl Landy of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT). “If one thing is out of sync, it affects the whole production. We feel the same way about safety.” Recognizing the unique – and ever-changing – demands of the

live performance industry – PACT and OSSA are currently working in partnership as they build awareness of health and safety in this non-conventional field. “We recognize the uniqueness of this industry, and are committed to listening, recognizing and adapting so that we can get the best possible results,” says Marylynn Colasanti, OSSA Client Development Manager. “If we don’t have what they need, rigging for instance, we’ll work in partnership with another organization such as the CSAO to deliver the training.”

“Working with the safety organizations has been very rewarding,” adds Cheryl. “They know safety. We know theatre. Together we’re protecting the art and the artist.” ☺



# UPDATED BASIC CERTIFICATION TRAINING PROGRAM

In response to feedback from our members, and in order to reflect the most recent amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, The OSSA has revised its basic certification training program. This comprehensive health and safety training program was developed by the Ontario Service Safety Alliance specifically to meet the needs of service sector businesses in Ontario.

## The New Program Contains Five Training Modules

- Health and Safety and the Law
- Workplace Health and Safety
- Joint Health and Safety Committees
- Workplace Inspections
- Accident Investigations

Videos from the previous six-module version can be exchanged for the revised set of five at a reduced cost.

OSSA's Health and Safety Basic Certification Training Program incorporates high-retention, interactive training elements, and is available in two formats: instructor-facilitated classroom training and self-paced video-based training.

Effective health and safety training for managers and workers reduces workplace injuries, illnesses and costs while improving health, morale, productivity and competitive position.

Call OSSA at 1-888-478-6772 to find out more about our Updated Health and Safety Basic Certification Training Program. ☺

## Do We Have the Correct Information?

If we have the incorrect/incomplete address, or if you would like this newsletter re-directed to someone else within your firm, please indicate the information to be corrected, and fax it back to The Safety Mosaic at (416) 250-9500.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## NAOSH Week for Prevention of Workplace Hazards

A country can never do too much to protect its most valuable resource — the labour force. Canada has made progress in the fight against workplace hazards over the past few decades, but the statistics are still staggering: on average, a person is injured on the job every 9 seconds. Even more disturbing is that one third of compensable time-loss accidents involve people between the ages of 15 and 29. Canada spends on average \$5 billion a year in direct costs — \$82,500 for every minute worked — on compensation for workers who are injured or killed in industrial accidents.

In a renewed effort to address the issue, Canada will be participating in the third annual North American Occupational Safety and Health (NAOSH) Week from May 17 to 23, 1999. The theme for this year's NAOSH Week is “Healthy Workers. Healthy Business”. The Canadian regional focus is on young workers. Once again, HRDC's Labour Program will partner with the provincial Ministry of Labour, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and the province's safe workplace associations to organize activities across the province.

*For more information about North American Occupational Safety and Health Week activities in your region, contact the local office of HRDC's Labour Program (look up Human Resources Development Canada in the federal section of the blue pages or government pages of your local telephone directory) or visit the NAOSH Week Web Site:*

*<http://www.ccohs.ca/naosh>, from which you can link to other related sites. ☺*

# Tightening the Use of Back Belts

Four out of five people will experience a bout of back pain at some time in their lives. In fact, back pain ranks second only to headaches as the most frequent cause of pain. Increasingly, employers have provided employees with back belts in the hopes of reducing incidents and associated costs. However, recent research has shown that back belts may actually be doing more harm than good in preventing back injuries.

According to findings, uninjured workers do not appear to derive any benefit from wearing back belts. In fact, it has been proven that back injuries sustained while wearing a belt are often more severe than those sustained without a back belt. In addition, data shows that long-term use of a belt can actually diminish strength in spinal and lower back muscles, which may ultimately increase the potential for back injury when the belt is not being worn. There is, however, solid evidence that job redesign based on ergonomic principles can reduce forces on the back and ultimately prevent back injuries.

Proponents of belt use contend that back belts increase intra-abdominal pressure and therefore improve back support. However, this also increases blood pressure and stress on the heart. Others believe in the intrinsic value of belts — that, by providing back belts, employers are demonstrating their concern for employee welfare, hopefully influencing the employee's desire to lift properly. They believe that belts serve as a constant reminder to lift properly and minimize forward and side bending. However, a good back training program can often accomplish the same goal.

As a continuing controversial topic in health and safety, the Ministry of Labour in Ontario, the Canadian Centre for Occupational Injury Reduction and other governmental health and safety agencies have stated that they believe back belts do not reduce occupational injury rates and are therefore not recommended for use by uninjured workers. However, for those who have suffered an injury, back belts can play a role in the treatment of pain and in reinforcing proper lifting techniques. ☺

## Tips for Safe Back Belt Use

- All employees wearing belts should be screened for cardiovascular risks by medical professionals.
- Belt wearers must receive training on lifting mechanics and proper belt usage i.e., loosen and tighten throughout the day.
- Belts should not be prescribed until an ergonomic assessment has been conducted of the individual's job.
- Belts are not to be considered for long term use. Workers should be weaned off the belt over a period of time. Once off the belt, the worker should be initially monitored as the risk of injury is elevated for a period of time.

## Recognizing Canadian Excellence in Workplace Health

The National Quality Institute and Health Canada are encouraging Canadian organizations to take a leadership role in improving employee quality of life with the introduction of The Healthy Workplace Award.

Developed in consultation with key health professionals, the Canadian Healthy Workplace Criteria examines how employee health and well-being are integrated into every aspect of the organization. The criteria covers the four key components or "drivers" that are essential to developing and sustaining a healthy and supportive workplace: Leadership, Planning, People Focus and Process Management.

The National Quality Institute is an independent, not-for-profit organization established in 1992 as a joint initiative of the private and public sectors with the support of Industry Canada. To order the Criteria and Entry Guide or for further information, contact the National Quality Institute at (416) 251-7600 or 1-800-263-9648 or visit their web site at <http://www.nqi.ca>. The deadline for this year's awards is April 1st, 1999. ☺

# OSSA Consulting Services

Our consultants provide the experience and expertise you need to become self-sufficient in training and managing health and safety in the workplace. For more information about our services, please contact the consultant listed for your area.

*(Please note that not all toll-free phone numbers were available at press time).*

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# Rethinking OFFICE ERGONOMICS

Most of what we know about office set-up or posture has been learned over the years, and while much of it is still accurate, new research about office ergonomics has revealed better work practices that maximize comfort and efficiency.

Many of the new ideas about office ergonomics are based on varying your tasks and changing your body posture throughout the day. Here are some examples of how the old rules of ergonomics are being re-thought. These guidelines should be tailored to individual needs and preferences.



Issue/Equipment	Common Practice	Best Practice
Monitor Distance	18" — 24" preferred distance	20" — 30" preferred distance.
Monitor Height	The top of the screen at eye height.	The top of the screen at eye height is the <i>highest</i> position for a monitor. Some people find a lower monitor to be more comfortable for the eyes and neck, particularly if they wear bifocals or must look at the keyboard to type.
Monitor Position	The monitor was commonly placed on top of the CPU, primarily for convenience sake, not efficiency or comfort.	Height of the monitor should be adjusted according to the individual's preference.
Keyboard Position	Positioned at the front of the work surface.	The keyboard position should allow the upper arms to "hang" relaxed from the shoulder. Wrists should be kept straight and elbows should not rest on anything hard or sharp.
Keyboard Height	Elbow height with elbows bent 90 degrees and forearms parallel to floor.	The keyboard can be above or below elbow height so long as the wrists are straight while keying.
Wrist Position	Wrists should be kept straight.	Conventional wisdom still holds true, although wrists can be flexed 10-20 degrees.
Wrist Rests	Often a good idea.	The term "wrist rest" is really a misnomer. Wrist rests are, in fact, intended to rest palms on during breaks in keying. The carpal tunnel is under the wrist/palm and should not be subjected to much extra pressure. Wrist rests should never be used while keying.
Mouse	Typically placed on available desk surface with little thought given to the user.	Closer is better. Next to the keyboard or at the same height as the keyboard is ideal. The mouse position should be kept inside shoulder width so the arm doesn't have to be extended to reach. Don't rest hand on mouse, or hold mouse when not in use.
Chair Height	Positioned at a height that allows the feet to reach the floor when the legs are in the position of 90 degrees (at the knee).	Chair height should be relative to the keyboard height. The legs should move often, not stay fixed in the ninety degree position. The chair should, if possible, be low enough for the feet to rest on the floor, even when extended. If necessary, platforms or footrests may be used.
Posture	An upright posture, with the hips at ninety degrees.	Research supports the idea of a much wider hip angle — with 110-120 degrees or so as an "optimum" angle. Also, when reclining, the lower back muscles work less and the spine supports less weight, since body weight is supported by the chair's backrest. This reduces strain on the lower back muscles and discs.
Rest Breaks	Approximately fifteen minutes long, every two hours or so.	Very short breaks for such activities as typing, done very frequently — for example, 30-60 second breaks every ten minutes or so — are more appropriate. These should happen in addition to the normal fifteen-minute coffee breaks.

## JOIN OUR ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

The Office and Related Services Advisory Committee is currently seeking participation from members of the following industries:

- **Supply of Clerical Labour & Placement Agencies**
- **Legal & Financial Services**  
(i.e. Chartered banks; Credit Unions; Trust Companies; Mortgage & Real Estate Investment Companies; Chartered Accountants/Accounting Services; Lawyers & Notaries; etc.)
- **Advertising & Entertainment**  
(i.e. Live Entertainment/Theatre; Photo Labs; Outdoor Displays/Billboards; Motion Picture Theatres; etc.)  
*Note: All services listed in Workplace Safety & Insurance Board — Rate Groups 927, 956 & 962.*

The Committee has been established to:

- **heighten awareness** — of health and safety and accident prevention through education and information exchange.
- **encourage open communication** — amongst members regarding cross-service problems and issues.
- **make recommendations** — for sector specific products and services and provide input on hazards, issues and trends.
- **provide feedback** — for purposes of providing input to the WSIB Service Sector Inter-agency Group.

If you are interested in participating, please contact:  
**Maryllynn Colasanti**  
Client Development Manager, OSSA  
at 1-888-478-OSSA.

# Upcoming Industry Trade Shows

The following is a listing of upcoming trade shows and conferences of interest to the service sector.

VENUE	DATE	LOCATION
Ottawa Hull Foodservice Expo '99	March 22 & 23	Ottawa Congress Centre, On.
IAPA Health and Safety Day	March 24	Glen Abbey, Oakville, On.
Insurance Broker Association of Ontario Conference	April 12 & 13	Sheraton Fallsview, Niagara Falls, On.
Transportation Safety Association of Ontario Annual Meeting	April 13	Triumph Howard Johnson's, Toronto, On.
IAPA Forklift Truck Awareness Training & Hands-on Evaluation	April 14 - 16	Norfolk Fruit Growers, Simcoe, On.
Retail Council of Canada Annual Resources Protection Conference and Trade Show	April 19 & 20	Marriott Hotel, Toronto, On.
Education Safety Association Health & Safety Conference '99	April 26	Sheraton Hotel, Toronto, On.
IAPA Health and Safety Conference	April 26 - 28	Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Toronto, On.
Productive Workplace Exhibition	May 4 & 5	Lansdowne Park, Ottawa, On.
Can Clean '99	May 5 & 6	National Trade Centre, Toronto, On.
IAPA Fork Lift Truck Assessment and Hands-on Evaluation	May 11 - 14	Niagara Falls, On.
Ready Set Go - OSSA AGM and Annual Conference	May 19	Novotel, North York

*Let us know about your upcoming show or event.*

*Forward your event information to:*



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