



THE safety mosaic

connecting people with health and safety news



ANGER AT WORK

A supervisor verbally abuses a worker who is late coming on shift.

A customer reaches across a counter and grabs a sales clerk who won't accept a return. A fellow employee makes threatening comments to a disliked co-worker.

These incidents are all examples of workplace violence. And each has the power to cause tremendous harm to your employees.

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ANGER AT WORK

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Many of us are quick to associate violence with incidents such as hitting, pushing and vandalism. However, workplace violence is not limited to behaviour that is physical by nature. In many cases, intimidating behaviour, verbal abuse, swearing, pranks and threats can be just as harmful – and just as dangerous to employees.

Within the service industry, there are many situations in which employees are at risk for workplace violence. Examples include jobs that involve handling money, prescription drugs, or liquor. General service jobs that rely on serving customers are also a concern, as employees often deal with people who are rushed, stressed, and ready to react when they feel service is not up to standard.

Lori Martin is President of Trauma Management Training Services. Her company is dedicated to educating individuals and workplaces about trauma, and how to live with it when it happens. She believes that many employees within the service sector don't recognize the danger that may exist within their workplaces. "Employers, within and outside the service industry, believe that it won't happen to them. Or they feel that talking about it will open the floodgates. In reality, a violence prevention program allows people to take self-responsibility. Educating them lets them start helping you prevent violence."

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, employers are required to take every precaution reasonable for the protection of their workers. That duty should include the development of a workplace violence prevention policy that clearly communicates management's commitment to preventing violent incidents. "Involve staff in the development of your policy if possible so you can be sure it reflects what's going on in your workplace," says Martin. "Then, support it. Update it. Talk about it. Sometimes, even that can be enough to stop someone from exhibiting unacceptable behavior."

Developing an internal worksite analysis, with management and employees working together, can provide a sense of the issues facing your particular workplace. Documents such as Joint Health and Safety Committee meeting minutes and incident reports can provide a valuable history of what has happened in the past. Looking at the workplace environment and at other industries for trends can highlight ideas that work and ones that don't.

Talking with employees on different shifts is always a good idea, according to Martin. "We all like to think we're in touch with what goes on in our workplaces but employees are the only ones who really know what happens. They can often identify potential problem areas and situations that you might not have thought of."

Looking at the attributes of workers, including job experience and training, can help to identify individuals who are at greater risk. It is recommended that a workplace analysis be evaluated annually.

Decreasing risks on the job is a pivotal component of a violence

prevention program. Take a look at administrative measures that are in place within the workplace. Are staff aware of the impact of violence? Do they know how to diffuse customer situations? Do they need crisis intervention training? Take the time to review internal guidelines. Look at work and staffing practices including money drops and pick ups and determine if incident reports are being completed on the job.

If physical measures are needed, ensure that they match the degree of risk. Expensive physical changes shouldn't be based on "what if" scenarios. Instead, they should respond to what the assessment has revealed.

If your workplace has staff working alone or in small groups, consider incorporating emergency evacuation measures into the system. A communication or alarm system, a back-up phone, or a sign-in sheet are all good ideas. Have emergency evacuation measures in place as well.

Training and education are essential. They provide employees with a level of comfort in understanding how to handle a potentially dangerous situation. Training also tells employees that management cares and supports them enough to keep them informed. Through information comes knowledge – and employees can participate more readily when they understand the issues at hand.

All training should be based on the working environment. Ensure that the information is communicated in the predominant language of each audience, and is customized to their needs.

Be sure to include seasonal and part-time workers. Leaving them out of training will only cause a weakness in the system that can have a dramatic impact on the entire workplace.

"Busy periods like Christmas can be a time of increased risk," notes Martin. "Customers are stressed, irritable and sometimes on an emotional roller coaster ride. Showing your staff how to diffuse potentially dangerous situations is a key way to keep things under control."

All training efforts should be on-going, beginning with orientation and then continuing with refresher training as needed. This is especially important in the service industry where a high level of turnover is experienced. If new incidents arise or old ones continue, go back to the analysis and begin again.

As part of due diligence, make sure you keep records of all training. Record the dates, times and attendance at your training sessions. This document can help you down the road if you need to demonstrate your diligence to a Ministry of Labour inspector.

"Your staff are your most valuable asset," says Martin. "Developing a program to protect them demonstrates your support, your caring and your commitment to always keeping them safe at work. Everyone can benefit from that."

Special thanks to Anne-Marie Steer, Occupational Health Advisor, Ministry of Community and Social Services, for her contribution to this article.

Looking for a Fresh Perspective on Workplace Health and Safety?



ANNOUNCING

Ontario Service Safety Alliance 2nd Annual Health and Safety Conference

Tuesday, April 18, 2000
Delta Hotel, Toronto

If you've been searching for ways to integrate health and safety into your workplace, we've got the solution. OSSA's 2nd Annual Health and Safety Conference provides a full day of vital information for your business including thought-provoking keynote presentations, practical sector-specific workshops and plenty of opportunities to network.

Watch for further details, or call us for more information at **1-888-478-OSSA.**



Restaurant and Foodservice • Vehicle Sales and Service
Tourism and Hospitality • Office & Related Services • Retail and Wholesale

Thanks for Asking

Carbon Monoxide Clarification

In our Fall 1999 issue, The Safety Mosaic ran an article entitled, "The Silent Killer". In it, the article's author, Peter Mills, suggested that, "In general, carbon monoxide detectors should be placed high, near the ceiling, for the most effective use." Several readers contacted us with a concern that, by placing a carbon monoxide detector near the ceiling, it would be unable to detect gases at a lower level.

We checked with the Toronto Fire Prevention Office who stated that carbon monoxide has a specific gravity that is almost the same as that of household air. Therefore, CO very quickly disperses into the environment. How close the CO detector is mounted to the ceiling or floor is not a relevant concern. Mr. Mills adds that he suggests placing detectors near the ceiling as a way of keeping them away from the curious minds – and hands – of toddlers and children.

Thanks to all who took the time to contact us about this issue. We always welcome your comments or questions.



GETTING A GRIP ON WINTER DRIVING

We've all experienced it. Behind the wheel, you're heading home on a cold winter's day. You spot an accident up ahead. You pump the brakes to slow down – except nothing happens. Your car continues to slide, slowing just centimeters off the bumper of the car ahead of you.

Across Ontario, drivers are bracing themselves for another big chill, and the unique set of problems winter creates. Roads that provide only one-tenth the surface grip they normally have. Limited visibility from snow and truck spray. Fatigue and stress caused by poor weather conditions and increased night driving.

Doug Annett is Operations Manager of Skid Control School in Oakville, Ontario. He and his staff teach the fundamentals of driver performance and safety in the traffic environment to thousands of individuals in the corporate and private sector. Through unique training programs, featuring a permanent paved skid pan and specialty training vehicles, students experience authentic skid training and practice in vehicle handling techniques. While many of the tips and techniques participants learn are “common sense”, Annett notes that many aren't being followed by those on the open road.

“The biggest mistake people make is believing that they should be driving differently in winter than from the rest of the year,” says Annett. “The reality is, winter driving is no different. We should be establishing good

habits over time that help us throughout the year.”

What is Annett's pet peeve? “Tailgating is the root of all evil. Drivers aren't practiced in looking ahead far enough.” That's why Annett drills into his students the importance of ‘forward thinking’ – that is, allowing a three second ‘safe zone’ in front at all times. “Leaving a safe zone allows you to see the potential for an accident – before it happens,” says Annett.

For many drivers, leaving that safe zone is easier said than done. “We tend to feel that if we leave too much space, someone will take it away,” notes Annett. “If that happens to you frequently, you're probably in the wrong lane.” In cases where a driver is being tailgated, Annett suggests getting aggressive in the search for your ‘safe zone’. “Start by asking yourself, ‘Is that driver able to stop?’ If he isn't, get out of the way,” advises Annett.

Annett's bottom line is this. “You can't control others on the road. If a driver doesn't like the way you're driving, he or she has the option of passing you, or slowing down. You can only control your own driving.”

THE SKID SCHOOL BASICS

Be Aware – At all times know what's going on behind you as well as in front of you. All vehicles are not alike. A truck will take up to four times as long to brake as a car, and you need to leave space accordingly for that.

Practice – Exercise smooth braking throughout the year. You won't have the chance to develop your style in the winter months.

Avoid Fatigue – We're not good at judging fatigue levels. We take longer to process information and make decisions. Falling asleep at the wheel becomes a very real possibility.

Follow Your Instincts – If the weather is bad, don't put your life on the line by heading out. Put the trip into perspective. We wouldn't hesitate to refuse unsafe work, so why should we put ourselves in unsafe driving conditions?

Getting the Specifics

Workplace-specific Hazard Training

Get ready – Workplace-specific Hazard Training is coming your way. As the second half of a two-part training process that included Basic Certification Training, the workplace-specific component is expected to be introduced into law within Ontario in the Year 2000.

Workplace-specific Hazard Training is designed to ensure that certified Joint Health and Safety Committee members are properly trained in the significant hazards that exist within their workplaces. Training needs are determined by a workplace hazard assessment that must be completed by the employer, ideally in consultation with the Joint Health and Safety Committee.

Training is developed on those hazards deemed “significant” by the individual workplace. Significant hazards include those that are prevalent in the workplace with the potential for injury and to which workers are regularly exposed. They also include hazards that frequently cause injuries; those which employees may be infrequently exposed to but have the potential for serious injury; and any designated substances that employees work with.

Overview training is then provided to all certified Joint Health and Safety Committee members, with the expectation that more in-depth training will be provided to workers directly exposed to the hazard.

Over the past several months, the OSHA has implemented plans to assist employers in meeting the pending workplace-specific certification requirement.

Step 1

Identify hazards that are prevalent in the industry

OSHA has been working with several groups of stakeholders to identify the hazards in the service sector. “Our primary goal is to anticipate the hazards each sector will require training on,” says OSHA Program Director, John Aird. “This will enable us to respond with the appropriate types of training.”

Step 2

Develop a hazard assessment tool.

By the end of 1999, OSHA will be ready to pilot a hazard assessment tool within the service industry. The purpose of the hazard assessment tool is to help clients identify the hazards that exist within their workplace, and to determine their significance. “We've tried to anticipate what an MOL inspector would look for,” notes Aird. “This tool is designed to help employers organize their people and resources to address the hazards that require training, and determine if an organization already has equivalent training in place that would be acceptable to the Ministry of Labour.”

The user-friendly hazard assessment tool is designed to take between one-half hour and a day to complete, depending on the size and complexity of the workplace.

Step 3

Develop a series of modules that workplaces can selectively choose to meet their needs.

OSHA is currently ramping up its resources to develop a series of training modules that build on the learning objectives covered in the Basic Certification program. Workplace-specific modules will be designed for both self-paced and facilitated delivery. The first group of modules is scheduled for release in January 2000 with all modules available by April 2000. Aird notes that the first modules will cover the most common hazards. “For the employer who wants to get up and running with this program, we're committed to providing the tools that will enable them to get started quickly,” says Aird.

THE SAFETY AGE

Realities of Younger and Older Employees in the Workplace

Ensuring the Future

As one of the biggest employers of young people, the restaurant and foodservice sector provides an exciting new world of opportunity. To learn about responsibility and punctuality in a fast-paced environment. To polish communication and money management skills. To increase self-esteem and add to their base of valuable work experience.

Unfortunately, many of the young people entering this sector of the workforce will arrive untrained, unprotected and unaware. The results of that vulnerability will be thousands of visits to emergency rooms, hundreds of hospitalizations and the unacceptable deaths of young employees from work-related injuries.

According to a recent study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), occupational injuries and illnesses among workers under 18 years of age are prevalent but preventable. The study examined U.S. data from 1993 and estimated that, as a conservative figure, working youths sustained 21,620 injuries and illnesses serious enough to result in one or more lost work days during that year.

According to NIOSH data, those injuries happened most often in restaurants, bars and other foodservice outlets and more frequently among 16 and 17 year olds than any other child age group. Sprains and strains, cuts and lacerations, contusions and abrasions, heat burns, and fractures and dislocations were the most common types of injuries and illness.

Employers are responsible for becoming familiar with standards applicable to their businesses and for ensuring a safe working environment. But the commitment of employers doesn't end there. When it comes to young workers, employers must recognize not only the relative inexperience of their staff, but the impact that maturity and developmental levels can have on learning styles, judgment, and behavior.

NIOSH outlines some simple, practical steps to protect young workers from job-related injuries and illnesses. Here are several:

Assess and eliminate the potential for injury or illness associated with tasks required of young workers. Employers should ensure that all workers are familiar with standard safety precautions in the workplace. Make sure the size of the young worker is matched to the task. And limit the use of such equipment as industrial mixers and slicers to experienced, well trained staff members.

Provide training to ensure that young workers recognize hazards and are competent in safe work practices. Consider hazardous materials and working conditions when developing training. Exposures to hazardous materials such as cleaning solutions and other chemicals may cause an immediate illness, but it can also result in long-term exposure that may not be detected until months or years later.

Routinely verify that young workers continue to recognize hazards and employ safe work practices. Practice doesn't always make perfect. It is human nature to take short cuts or to adopt our own way of doing things over time. Encourage supervisors to test employees regularly and to observe their work practices to ensure they are following safe work practices.

Ensure that young workers are appropriately supervised to prevent injuries and hazardous exposures. For example, an inexperienced young employee working alone at a fast food restaurant at night is at greater risk than a seasoned staff member.

Involve supervisors and experienced workers in developing an injury and illness prevention program and in identifying and solving safety and health problems. Create "mentoring" or a "buddy" system in your workplace where young and older, experienced workers can work together to keep the workplace safe.

Protecting a Growing Sector

We are a population of aging individuals. With a significant "baby boomer" population hitting their senior years, it is expected that the number of workers aged 55 and older will grow twice as fast as the total workforce for the next several years. As this generation nears retirement age, many organizations are beginning to wonder how they are going to replace staff positions without enough young workers to fill the gap.

For more and more organizations within the restaurant and foodservice sector, the solution has been to hire and keep older employees in the workforce. Companies such as McDonald's have actively recruited older employees for years. And with good reason. Older workers are one-third less likely than younger workers to be hurt seriously enough to lose work time. They also bring valuable life experience, good judgment and stability to the job – assets that are often hard to find among young inexperienced workers.

On the flip side, however, are studies that show that older workers are at a greatly increased risk of work-related fatalities than younger workers. According to U.S. statistics, in 1997 the rate of fatal traumatic injuries was 19.5 per 100,000 workers aged 65 years and older compared to 4.1 per 100,000 workers aged 25 to 34. Older workers may also be more susceptible to chronic diseases. And while little is known about the physical resilience and capacity of older workers, it is generally accepted that older individuals will take longer to recover from an injury than those in their younger years.

So, what can employers do to benefit from the many advantages of hiring older employees while ensuring that health and safety training is adequate – and appropriate – to protect them?

Take a look at the demographics of your workforce, and identify the safety needs of all your staff – including older workers. Then, develop a safety standard that fits the needs of that population. OSSA Client Development Manager, Mike Sheluk, advises that employers do a complete hazard analysis of their workplace on a regular basis. "Older employees may be more susceptible to such stresses as repetitive motion injuries from a lifetime of work," notes Sheluk. "Employers can reduce that risk by analyzing the risk, and then designing out the stresses before a process is put into place."

When hiring, consider the abilities of your new employees. "When we hire, we identify the jobs that have a particular safety sensitivity," says Mark Hennessy, Health and Safety Manager,

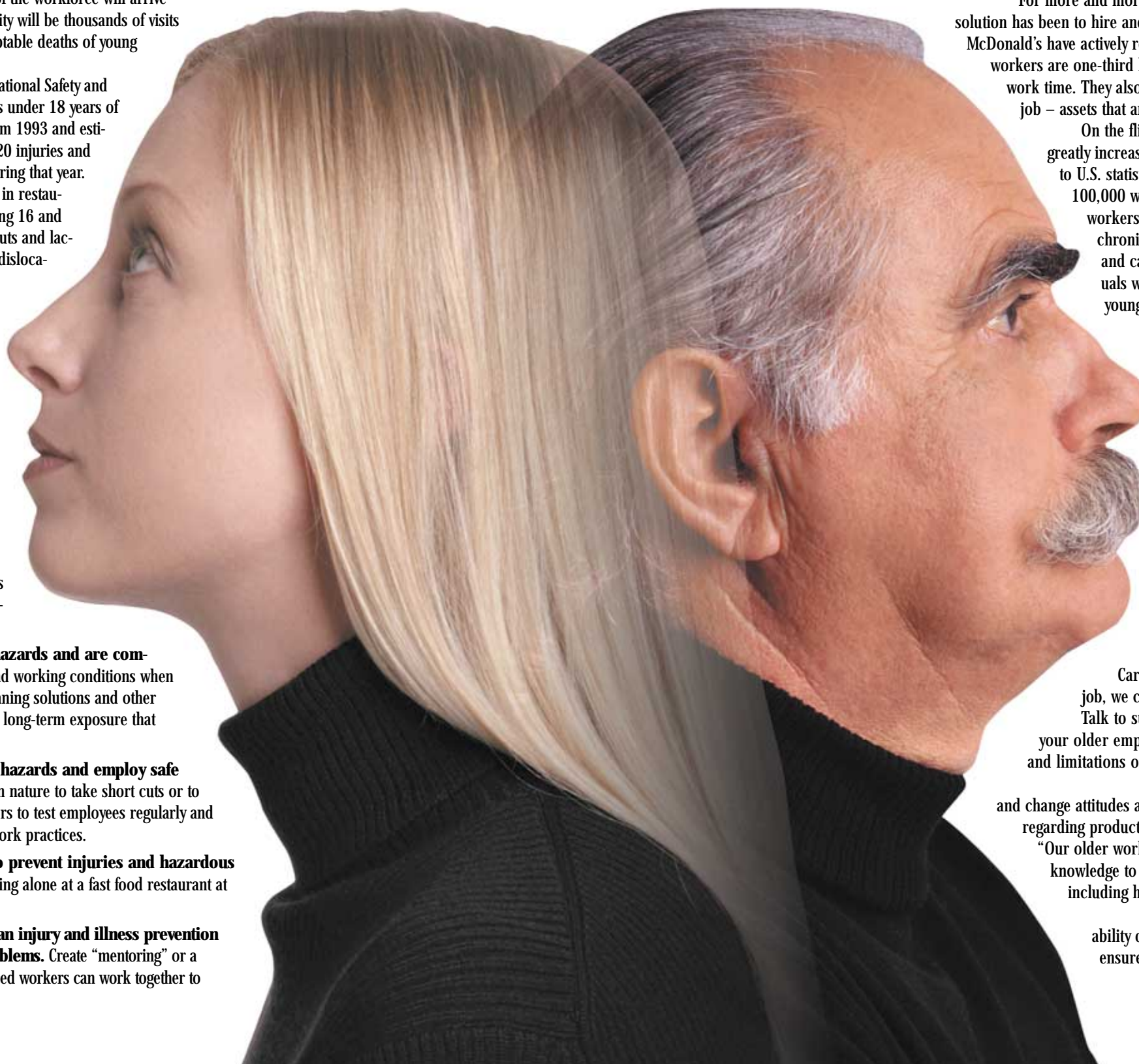
Cara Operations. "By looking at the skill and ability required for the job, we can hire safely and appropriately."

Talk to supervisors and management about the specific safety needs of your older employees. "We encourage our supervisors to consider the strengths and limitations of their employees before assigning work tasks," says Hennessy.

Think about ways in which you can encourage others to rethink and change attitudes about older adults in the workplace. Replace myths with real facts regarding productivity, health, attendance and the ability to retrain older workers.

"Our older workers who have been with us for a long time have a vast amount of knowledge to share," notes Hennessy. "They can show younger workers a lot, including how to work safely. That's of a real benefit to us."

For any position with the workplace, always concentrate on the ability of the person to perform the job required. That way you can help ensure that no one – regardless of age – gets injured.



Upcoming Industry Events

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

VENUE	DATE	LOCATION
FEBRUARY		
Canadian Retail Hardware Building Materials Show	February 6 – 8	National Trade Centre, Toronto
Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario Conference	February 16 – 18	Sheraton Centre Hotel, Toronto
MARCH		
Ontario Real Estate Association Leadership Conference 2000	March 2	Sheraton Centre Hotel, Toronto
Ottawa-Hull Foodservice & Hospitality Show	March 21 – 22	Ottawa Congress Centre, Ottawa
Retail Council of Canada 2000 Retail Resources Protection Conference & Trade Show	March 27 – 28	Location TBD
APRIL		
Ontario Service Safety Alliance Conference	April 18	Delta Toronto East, Toronto

*Let us know about your upcoming show or event.
Forward your event information to:*



Ontario Service Safety Alliance
4950 Yonge Street, Suite 1500
Toronto, Ontario
M2N 6K1
Tel: (416) 250-9111
Fax: (416) 250-9500
1-888-478-OSSA
Website: www.ossa.com

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