

# Working Together

---

## On Prevention

## Let's talk prevention

Prevention in the workplace matters to all of us. Whether you're a worker or an employer, health and safety affects you and many others — your family, your co-workers, your friends, your doctor, your community. Creating healthier and safer Yukon workplaces depends on everyone's involvement. The Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board wants to work with you so that the prevention of workplace injuries and illnesses becomes your top priority.

*"Safety is the first basic human need. If you don't feel safe in your environment, how can you possibly do a good job?"*

Mike Simms, Plant Manager,  
Wainwright Industries,  
St. Peters, Missouri

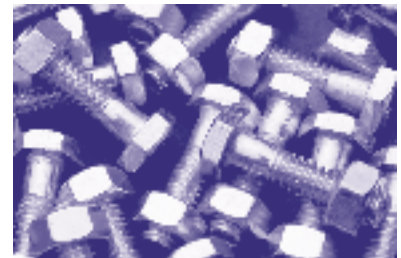
It's not acceptable to view injuries as a necessary cost of doing business. If you're a worker, a safe and healthy workplace makes you feel valued, secure and productive. If you're an employer, an effective prevention program is not only the right way to protect worker health and safety, it's good for business.

Across the country, employers are proving that when they make health and safety their top priority, their company's overall performance improves. "By taking a proactive approach to workplace health and safety, you, as an employer, are protecting your most valuable asset — and that is your employee," says Suromitra Sanatani, former vice-president of the B.C./Yukon division of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

### What's the Yukon record on prevention?

The impact of workplace injuries in the Yukon is getting worse. In 1992, the average length of a claim for a worker injured severely enough to miss work was 35 days. In 2004, it was more than 100 days. For a worker, an injury means a painful healing period, lower quality of life and loss of income. For an employer, it means the cost of lost production time, training a replacement employee and repairing any damaged equipment. That's in addition to the claim's effect on assessment premiums.

The total cost of treating a seriously injured worker (in a fall from a ladder, for example), including travel to see a specialist, surgery, rehabilitation, and compensation, might be \$22,500. That amount is paid by the YWCHSB out of assessments. Compare that to the employer's cost of a short training program for workers and supervisors plus the purchase of suitable equipment: about \$800. It's clear that prevention makes sense for both workers and employers.



### Safety management systems

A safety management system means planning the steps to a safer workplace, doing those steps, checking them to make sure they're effective and regularly making improvements. The purpose: to reduce workplace injuries and illnesses. Accidents don't "just happen." They happen because of the actions or inactions of people. Safe, successful companies, both small and large, know that health and safety must be managed. They share five characteristics:

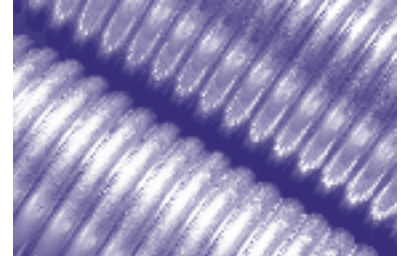
1. Management is committed to safety and demonstrates that commitment by "walking the talk."
2. Employees are informed and accountable so that safety is part of everyone's responsibilities.
3. Practical safety procedures are part of all workplace training and are kept up-to-date.

4. Everyone from the top down is involved in safety, including managers, supervisors, contractors and workers.
5. Hazard identification and control is a key part of daily operations.

### What does a safety management system involve?

If you're like most Yukon employers, you have a small business with fewer than 20 workers. What would work best for you?

In British Columbia, all small businesses are required to have an informal health and safety program. The program involves a monthly meeting with workers to discuss health and safety issues, followed by corrective action where needed. The following steps to a safer workplace have proved to be effective for small businesses across Canada:



- Develop a health and safety policy that includes the goals of the program as well as the responsibilities of the employer, supervisors and workers.
- Regularly monitor work procedures, equipment and machinery to eliminate and control hazards.
- Make sure workers know about workplace hazards, are familiar with health and safety regulations, and show they can carry out their tasks safely.
- Hold a monthly meeting to talk about safety, including any unsafe conditions or practices, and take steps to correct any concerns.
- Determine the causes of any accidents and near misses so that you can take corrective action.
- Maintain a first aid treatment record book, inspection and accident investigation reports, and records of program activities and training.
- Review your program annually to examine its effectiveness and weaknesses. Maintain not only your commitment to safety but also the interest and involvement of your employees.



Which of the above steps could you implement in your workplace? What special barriers do you face? How can the YWCHSB work with you to achieve the goal of safer workplaces for everyone?

### Other ways to promote prevention

Linking prevention to incentive programs is another option for the Yukon. Incentive programs are discussed in another of our issue papers.

The YWCHSB's goal is for all Yukon employers to have a safety management system in place by 2008. "Safety at work has to be more than a manual gathering dust on a shelf. It has to be a living breathing set of practices that people follow," says Joe Iles, Vice President of Yukon operations for Challenger Geomatics Ltd.

We look forward to receiving your comments.  
For more information or to provide feedback, contact us:

Working Together on Prevention  
401 Strickland Street, Whitehorse Y1A 5N8  
Phone 867-667-5645; toll-free 1-800-661-0443  
E-mail: [wcbconsultation@gov.yk.ca](mailto:wcbconsultation@gov.yk.ca).  
[www.wcb.yk.ca](http://www.wcb.yk.ca).

**Deadline for feedback is June 24, 2005**



**YUKON WORKERS'  
COMPENSATION  
HEALTH AND  
SAFETY BOARD**    **COMMISSION DE LA  
SANTÉ ET DE LA SÉCURITÉ  
AU TRAVAIL  
DU YUKON**