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WORKERS IN CONFINED SPACES NOW BETTER PROTECTED

New Regulations A Major Advancement in Workplace Safety

KITCHENER — The McGuinty government is improving workplace health and safety by enhancing protections for workers likely to work around confined spaces, Minister of Labour Steve Peters said today.

“The health and safety of Ontario workers is our number one priority,” said Peters at the Kitchener-Wilmot Hydro offices in Kitchener. “That’s why we are advancing workplace safety, especially for workers who enter or work around confined spaces, such as vats, pits and holding tanks.”

A “confined space” is an enclosed space that is not designed for continuous human occupancy and can have a build up of gases or dust, or lack of oxygen that can put workers at risk of injury, or even death.

Confined space requirements in four existing regulations – construction, industrial, health care and mining – are now enhanced to provide stronger protection and consistency. In addition, most workers covered by the Occupational Health and Safety Act, who were previously not covered by specific sector regulations, will now be included under a new regulation for confined spaces. Transportation and municipal workers, for example, are now covered. All new requirements will come into effect on September 30, 2006.

“The McGuinty Government is on the side of workers and their families,” said John Milloy, MPP for Kitchener Centre. “Work in confined spaces is inherently dangerous without proper training, planning and procedures. These enhancements are just some of the ways the Ontario government is ensuring that the health and safety of Ontario workers is not compromised.”

This is just one of a number of initiatives the government has taken to support Ontario workers. Other initiatives include:

- The High-Risk initiative, targeting enforcement efforts at Ontario workplaces with the highest injury rates and highest costs in Workplace Safety and Insurance Board claims
- The Pains and Strains initiative, targeting musculo-skeletal injuries, which make up a significant portion of all workplace injuries
- Hiring 200 new health and safety inspectors. Of these, 131 are already working across Ontario. All 200 will be carrying out inspections of high-risk workplaces early next year.

“Workplace injuries and fatalities have an enormous effect on workers, their families, their employers and their communities,” said Peters, “That is why our government is taking strong measures to improve workplace health and safety.”

For more information on the new regulation, see the Ministry of Labour website at www.labour.gov.on.ca or call your nearest Ministry of Labour office, listed in the Blue Pages.

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To review the consolidated Confined Space regulation please visit:
http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Regs/English/050632_e.htm

Please write to the following e-mail address to request a copy of the Confined Space guideline when it is completed : mol.publications@mol.gov.on.ca

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