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**GOVERNMENT ENHANCING PROTECTION
FOR WORKERS IN CONFINED SPACES**
New Regulations Mean Better Protection For Workers

QUEEN'S PARK — The McGuinty government has updated and strengthened protection for workers in potentially dangerous confined spaces, Minister of Labour Steve Peters announced today.

“We are committed to supporting and protecting workers and their families,” said Peters. “That’s why we are ensuring that workers who enter or work around confined spaces, such as vats, pits and holding tanks, are properly protected.”

Confined space requirements in four existing regulations – construction, industrial, health care and mining – are now being enhanced to provide stronger protection and consistency. Most workers covered by the Occupational Health and Safety Act, who have not been previously covered by specific regulations, will now be covered by a new regulation for confined spaces. These include transportation and municipal workers, among others. All new requirements will come into effect on September 30, 2006.

These measures are not just for workers, but for their families as well. A workplace injury has a significant impact on entire families – spouses, children and parents – as well as friends and co-workers. There is also a financial impact on the workplace through lost time, lower productivity and additional expenses.

This is just one of a number of initiatives the government has taken to support working families. Other measures 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.

“We are on the side of working families. The over-riding concern of the government is to ensure that the health and safety of every worker is not compromised,” said Peters. “These changes have been carefully developed in cooperation with employers and labour, who support this action.”

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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