

OUTSTANDING RESULTS PRODUCED BY ONTARIO'S WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY STRATEGY

The workplace health and safety strategy

In July 2004 the McGuinty government announced its plans to reduce workplace injuries by 20 per cent through a comprehensive, integrated health and safety strategy using education, training, legislation/regulation and enforcement. The strategy's goal is that, by 2008, there will be 20,000 fewer lost-time injuries per year. Lost-time injuries are claims by workers who have lost wages by missing work as a result of a temporary or permanent impairment.

The strategy is being carried out through the high-risk workplace initiative and the targeted inspection of priority firms.

The high-risk workplace initiative

The high-risk workplace initiative is focusing on workplaces with the highest injury rates and costs. More than 30,000 workplaces, representing 10 per cent of the companies insured by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), are responsible for some 40 per cent of all injuries and costs incurred.

By assisting and educating these workplaces with high injury rates on healthier and safer work practices – while continuing to give priority to investigating workplace fatalities, critical injuries, work refusals, work stoppages and immediate hazards to worker health and safety – lost-time injuries can be reduced by 20 per cent. This will have significant benefit for Ontario's health and safety system and the quality of life for the people of Ontario.

Through its high-risk workplace initiative, the Ministry of Labour is targeting its inspections on firms with the highest injury rate and highest WSIB costs – up to 6,000 annually – and inspecting them up to four times a year.

Inspectors are visiting these sites up to four times a year, focusing on workplace hazards to help firms reduce on-the-job injuries. When the high-risk initiative was launched, these firms represented just two per cent of all firms insured by the WSIB, but accounted for 10 per cent of all lost-time injuries and 20 per cent of injury costs in Ontario.

Results

After over two years of implementation, results show the workplace health and safety strategy is working and the government is on track to achieve its four-year commitment to reduce injuries by 20 per cent, with 20,000 fewer lost-time injuries.

Due to the overall workplace health and safety strategy, there have been over 14,000 fewer lost-time injuries by the end of 2005 than would have otherwise occurred. In 2004 there were 5,500 fewer lost-time injuries, and 9,100 fewer in 2005. Results for 2006 are not final, but initial reports show that we remain on target to meet our goals.

Given that each incident cost a business an estimated \$57,000 in 2004 and \$71,000 in 2005 according to the WSIB, more than \$960 million in costs were avoided by Ontario businesses and the WSIB over a two-year period. Those savings continue to add up.

Ontario's lost-time injury rate has been reduced from 2.2 per 100 workers in 2003 to 2.0 by the end of 2005. This represents half of the government's proposed 20 per cent reduction. The lost-time injury rate is measured as the number of workers suffering a lost-time injury per 100 workers.

The high-risk initiative is focusing on the right areas. Initial analysis reveals that 75 per cent, or three out of four high-risk firms being visited, have been found by inspectors to be not in compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations.

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