



# Taking Action... for a healthy and safe workplace

# January 2005 Update

Saskatchewan has one of the highest workplace injury rates in Canada. In 2003, almost 5% of our workers, 15,000 in total, suffered an injury serious enough to be off the job.

Employers, workers and agencies committed to workplace safety are renewing their efforts to create healthier and safer work conditions. In September 2003, the provincial *Action Plan* outlined five effective strategies to prevent workplace injuries and illnesses. In recent months, there have been some modest improvements in Saskatchewan injury rates.

Let's consider five reasons **WHY** taking action is so important by looking at what's happened in Saskatchewan workplaces over the last five years.

1. **147 workers killed on the job or from the job**
  - 58 workers died from injuries on the job, such as falls
  - 42 workers killed from motor vehicle crashes while working
  - 34 workers died from work-related health problems, such as cancer and asbestosis
  - 13 Saskatchewan workers died from various causes while working out of province
2. **2,193 workers permanently impaired from workplace injuries**
3. **72,377 workers injured seriously enough to be off the job**
4. **1,876,766 workdays lost from workplace injuries and illnesses**
5. **\$948 million dollars in compensation claims alone**



The above statistics do not include the work-related fatalities and injuries on Saskatchewan farms and ranches not covered by the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board (WCB). A future *Action Update* will focus on what's happening in Saskatchewan's most hazardous sector.

Note: The fatality information is based on WCB data from the last five years of the 'Day of Mourning' periods April 29, 1999 to April 28, 2004; other statistics are from the 2003 WCB Annual Report for the 1999-2003 period.

## Why are so many workers dying or being injured on the job?

Those committed to workplace health and safety see work-related “accidents” to be predictable and preventable. There is a story behind each tragedy. Although the details will vary, there are common reasons why so many are injured or even die from work.

**Way of life - or not** - at our workplaces and in our communities, health and safety is not the priority it should be. Recognizing and reducing risks must be a bigger part of our culture.

**Standards** - far too often, we don't understand or practice the safety and health standards that have proven to prevent workplace injuries or poor health.

**Support** - we need to have a better understanding of how work conditions, processes and substances affect worker health in the short and long term and how to eliminate or at least minimize the risks from these hazards.

**Training** - all workers, and especially new and/or young workers, need proper training and supervision to do the job safely.

**Responsibility** - we must own up to our shared responsibility for our own safety and the safety of those we work with - those with the most authority have the most responsibility.

## Taking Action....

Our collective goal is to improve workplace health and safety. The initial target set in 2003 called for a 20% reduction of time-loss injuries over the next four years. Progress is being made. Recent initiatives that are making a difference include:

- More workplace inspections to increase knowledge and enforcement of health and safety standards, including more prosecutions for non-compliance
- More worker/employer occupational health committees at workplaces, and more training for committee members
- More technical support through testing, presentations and publications to help workplaces better identify and control workplace hazards, including ergonomic issues
- More education and training focusing on health and safety for young workers through school and post-secondary programs, such as the *Ready for Work* program
- More public awareness messages about the importance of safety, including *WorkSafe Saskatchewan* and *Safe Saskatchewan* province-wide campaigns.

We have much more to do. Check out our website for:

- more information on *Action Plan* education and enforcement initiatives
- practical ways on how **you** can make your workplace safer and healthier

## “Protecting the health and safety of Saskatchewan workers”

For more information about taking action on workplace health and safety, contact the:

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