



WCB update

June 2006

SAFE Work Partners Address Construction Injury Rates

The Workers Compensation Board, together with SAFE Work partners in government and construction, are taking action in response to the rising time loss injury rate in Manitoba's construction sector.

Activity in this sector is the strongest in years. One of the consequences of this increased activity has been an increase in injuries. The upward trend in injuries experienced in the construction sector in 2005 has continued in the first four months of 2006.

The first step in addressing this concern is to improve awareness of safety among those working in construction. SAFE Work partners are doing so with a commercial which started airing on May 29. Dubbed "Sounds of Construction", the commercial is part of an awareness campaign integrated with initiatives designed to take action

and stem the rising number of injuries in Manitoba's construction sector.

One WCB initiative, in partnership with construction safety associations, is designed to get injury prevention information directly into the hands of supervisors and workers at construction sites.

provide statistics to the officers, helping them focus enforcement efforts where they will have the most impact.

"We welcome the support the SAFE Work initiatives provide. It's a good complement to the training and certification efforts we already have

in place to provide safe workplaces," says Winnipeg Construction Association Executive Vice President Ron Hambley.

There is good news though. Even with a spike in injuries in the construction sector, overall workplace injuries are down 19 percent since 2000 in Manitoba.



The WCB will hire two trained safety and health professionals from Red River College's Safety and Health program for the 2006 construction season to go out to construction sites and provide further safety education.

Another initiative is from the Manitoba government's Workplace Safety and Health Division. The Division will add more Safety and Health Officers to their team for the summer who will work solely in the construction sector. The WCB will

"The WCB has placed a great deal of importance on promoting a safe and healthy work environment and a culture of safety for all Manitobans," says WCB Chairperson Tom Farrell. "We have to keep working diligently and be responsive when injuries are increasing in certain sectors of the economy if we are to continue reducing the province's injury rate."

The "Sounds of Construction" commercial will continue to air till June 26, 2006.

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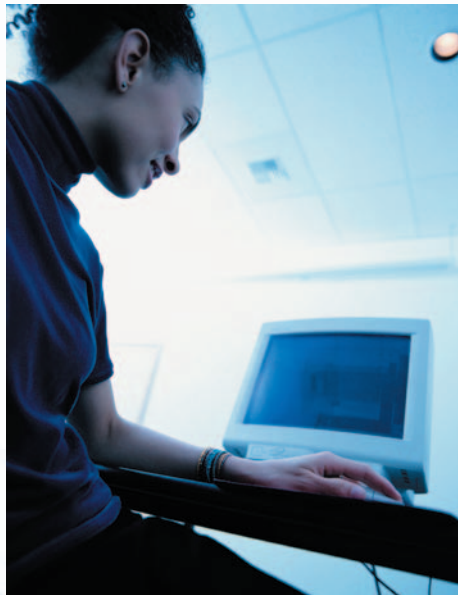
New Look for Online Clearance Request System

General contractors or any firm hiring for the purposes of construction, transportation or logging should get clearance information on their subcontractors before work commences and before any payment is made. Checking a company's clearance status is important because if someone you've hired isn't in good standing with the WCB, you might be liable for their assessment costs - or have your own assessment rates go up if they are injured on the job.

Clearance information has been available through the Online Clearance Request System since 2002 when the clearance process was automated. The WCB has now updated the system with a new look, however, the same useful functions are still available. You can access the system from the Online Services section of the WCB website at www.wcb.mb.ca.

If you're new to the system or want to familiarize yourself with the system's new look, check out the updated Clearances Getting Started Guide. The Guide is also located in

the Online Services section of the WCB website.



The Guide will show you how to use the system to search for firms, find clearance statuses and print clearances, (a letter that tells you whether a business, contractor or subcontractor has complied with the requirements of the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba).

If you become an Online Clearance Request System registered user, you can also use the system to compile and store lists of the subcontractors you use most often and receive updates on their clearance status via e-mail. The updated Guide will also help you learn how to use these functions.

The Online Clearance Request System is a secure Internet application providing access to public information only - confidential information is not accessible via the system. Clearance information is updated at the end of each business day so the information you access is current as of the end of the previous business day.

WCB's Online Clearance Request System and technical support are available to you 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Visit www.wcb.mb.ca for more information or call 954-4803 in Winnipeg or toll free 1-866-751-9245 to become a registered user.

Workplace Disability Management - Free Seminars and Assessments

Through a grant from the WCB's Community Initiatives and Research Program (CIRP), the Canadian Auto Workers Union will provide education sessions in disability management to Joint Health and Safety Committees in Manitoba workplaces. Also through a grant from the CIRP, National Disability & Resource Management Inc. will work with 50 Manitoba workplaces to assess the present state of their workplace injury prevention, disability management and return to work programs.

The Canadian Auto Workers Union education sessions will provide recognition, understanding and awareness of return to work strategies

by focusing on how to assess workers' restrictions, modify job tasks to facilitate a safe and timely return to work and set up a workplace committee to deal with return to work issues. To schedule a session, please contact Scott McLaren at 489-0355, extension 208 or e-mail smclaren@caw.ca.

National Disability & Resource Management Inc.'s research will identify gaps and barriers in the delivery of return to work programs in 50 participating workplaces. A detailed listing of recommendations to assist employers in lowering their injury rates, returning workers to employment in a safe and timely

manner and reducing expenditures will also be provided. To learn more about or participate in this project, please contact Dr. Garry Corbett at 255-3721 or e-mail drgorbett@ndrm.net.

Established in 1997, the CIRP funds projects on injury and disease prevention, safety in the workplace, treatment of workplace injuries, support for injured workers and their families and scientific, medical or other issues related to workers compensation. The 2005 CIRP provided grants to the Canadian Auto Workers Union and National Disability & Resource Management Inc. among other organizations.

Employers, Workers Provide Input on Re-employment Obligations

In 2007, new laws on re-employing injured workers will be implemented.

Re-employing injured workers as soon as they are medically able to return to work benefits everyone. And in the vast majority of cases, injured workers return to work with the same employer within a few days or weeks.

Effective January 1, 2007, employers who have 25 or more full-time or regular part-time workers will be required to re-employ injured workers who have been in their employ for at least 12 continuous months prior to their injuries.

“Workplace injuries and illness are costly to both you and your workers,” said Doug Sexsmith, WCB President and CEO. “The lives of the worker and his or her family are disrupted. Injuries where time is lost from work drive up WCB premiums and interrupt business productivity. Besides ensuring a safe workplace, implementing an effective return to work program is one of the best ways to minimize the human and financial effects of workplace injuries.”

Return to work programs help employers:

- keep experienced workers connected to the workplace
- reduce the cost of training replacements

- minimize workers compensation costs
- maintain productivity.

Return to work programs help workers:

- recover more quickly from their injuries
- maintain their job stability
- get back on track sooner and with less uncertainty about the future.

Amendments to *The Workers Compensation Act* were passed unanimously last year by members of the legislature. The new law states employers must offer positions to injured workers when they are fit to return to their original jobs. Employers can offer the pre-injury job or alternative positions of a nature and earnings comparable to their original work.

When workers are unable to return to their original jobs but can do suitable work, employers must offer workers the first opportunity to accept suitable work that becomes available. If necessary, the employer may be required to modify the workplace to accommodate the effects of the injury.

The re-employment obligation is time limited and ends at the earliest of three points:

- the second anniversary of the date of injury
- six months after the worker is medically able to perform the pre-injury job or suitable work
- the date the worker would have retired.

The new provisions recognize that a business decision made in good faith which was not affected by the worker being injured can impact a worker's employment status, including lay offs or termination.

To ensure employers and workers are aware of the new legislation, the WCB held a total of eight information sessions in Brandon, Thompson and Winnipeg in early April to provide details and hear comments from employers and workers. These were followed by a number of discussion groups with business and labour. An education campaign is planned for the fall.

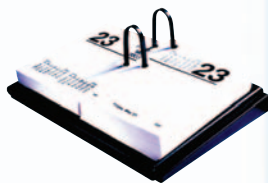
Fines and Penalties: New Amounts Taking Effect on July 1

Recent changes in workers compensation legislation included increases to fines and penalties that may be applied if workers and employers obligations under *The Workers Compensation Act* are not met.

The new amounts will apply to fines and penalties imposed on or after July 1, 2006.

For details, please go to www.wcb.mb.ca and see the fact sheet on Fines and Penalties under Publications or call 954-4321 or toll free 1-800-362-3340 to request a copy.

Dates to Remember



July 20, 2006 – The Quarterly Remittance for the second quarter of 2006 and payment must be received at the WCB by this date for firms reporting on a quarterly basis.

August 31, 2006 – The second installment must be received at the WCB by this date for firms reporting workers' earnings on an annual basis and paying in installments.



SAFE Roads Campaign Targets Speeding Motorists

A new joint initiative aimed at safety and awareness for road construction crews was unveiled on May 23. Called SAFE Roads, the initiative brings the message that “Work Shouldn’t Hurt” to motorists across the province and urges them to exercise caution when driving through construction zones.

The four-week SAFE Roads campaign is the latest in the very successful SAFE Work initiative which has been well-received by the public.

The SAFE Roads message is “What the heck were you thinking?” in reference to the shortsightedness that can lead to tragic mishaps in road construction zones.

The issue of safety for road construction workers is important in our cities and on our rural roads and highways. On any given day during the busy summer months, there are over 1,000 road construction projects taking place throughout Manitoba.

“Manitobans are becoming more aware of potential hazards and risks associated with their own work,” says WCB Chairperson Tom Farrell. “SAFE Roads is different – it’s about realizing how your actions can impact another person’s workplace, like a road construction zone, and what you can do to make it safer for workers and yourself.”

SAFE Roads features a radio ad which will play on eight stations in

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Winnipeg and Brandon, supported by a number of billboards in both cities. The tone of these ads helps get the attention of motorists who can play an important role in making road construction zones safer during the summer season.



Billboard showing new SAFE Roads message

Manitoba’s Transportation Minister Ron Lemieux was at the launch of the SAFE Roads initiative where he highlighted new penalties under *The Highway Traffic Act* for failing to slow down when traveling through construction zones.

“Our roads and bridges bring Manitoba’s neighbourhoods and communities together,” said Lemieux. “The people who build our roads are entrusted with the very important

responsibility to build them safely. In turn, they trust motorists to be careful and to slow down when entering a construction zone. Speeding is not an option.”

Also at the launch, Winnipeg Councillor Jae Eadie spoke about following signs and being careful when navigating the city’s many construction projects.

The event was well-attended by representatives from the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association and the Manitoba Floodway Authority.

The SAFE Roads Team is a joint safety effort between seven partners:

- Department of Transportation and Government Services
- City of Winnipeg
- Manitoba Floodway Authority
- Manitoba Heavy Construction Association
- Manitoba Hydro
- Manitoba Public Insurance and
- Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba.

Update is also available in a large print version.

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