

The Occupational Health & Safety Act, 1993 and its regulations establish rules and mechanisms to protect workers from injury in the workplace. The Act and regulations undergo a mandatory review every five years to keep the legislation current and effective. The most recent review is now complete and government will begin a series of consultations to ensure people have a chance to provide feedback before changes are introduced.

Saskatchewan Labour will immediately begin consulting on the following items:

- reducing injuries in the health care sector
- preventing falls
- operating powered mobile equipment (such as front-end loaders and bulldozers)
- updating the lists of chemical substances and contamination limits
- proper fit-testing for respiratory protective devices
- enhancing requirements for electrical workers
- working with substances in explosive environments
- strengthening asbestos regulations
- reviewing firefighter rescue teams
- other miscellaneous regulations, such as training requirements for cleaning machines in motion and workers in the logging industry

Consultations on housekeeping and administrative amendments will also begin immediately.

Of all the items being looked at, health care and fall prevention will be most significant. Here's why.

Reducing Injuries in the Health Care Sector

The health care sector had the highest number of injuries in Saskatchewan in 2005. According to Workers' Compensation Board data, this sector had 2,468 time loss injuries (a time loss injury is one that causes a worker to lose more time from work than simply the day of the injury) with a direct cost of \$14.4 million for compensation, medical and rehabilitation costs to employers. Many of these claims were related to the strains of moving and lifting patients. In fact, 64.2 per cent of all health care sector claims that year were caused by bodily reaction and exertion, with the most common type of claim being a back injury.

Nurses, aides and orderlies accounted for two of Saskatchewan's five most-injured occupations in 2005.

Proposed Regulatory Amendments – Health Care

- *Enhancing lifting requirements and requiring preventive maintenance on lifting equipment (Section 470)*
- *Requiring training for supervisors in health care to ensure they are knowledgeable in health and safety issues specific to health care (new section)*
- *Requiring employers to identify shift supervisors (new section)*

Regulations to Prevent Falls

The construction sector recorded Saskatchewan's second highest rate of injury claims in 2005, with 2,097 time loss injury claims accepted by the WCB in that year, and 15 fatalities over the last five years. Injury claims related to worker falls cost employers in the construction sector \$15 million annually for compensation, medical and rehabilitation.

Proposed Regulatory Amendments - Falls

- *Requiring a written fall protection plan (new section)*
- *Allowing the use of control zones as a method of fall protection (new section)*
- *Requiring the use of anchor points and anchor plates (new section)*
- *Enhancing existing and adding new fall protection requirements for working on roofs (Section 116)*

Questionnaires to garner feedback will be mailed out shortly to employers, employee groups and industry associations. Other interested parties are invited to participate by going online at www.labour.gov.sk.ca. Feedback will be accepted until March 30, 2007 on all items in this round of consultations except health care. Feedback on health care changes will be received until April 20, 2007.

Following the consultations, changes to The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993, and regulations will be introduced in upcoming legislative sessions.

For a complete list of consultation topics, please visit www.labour.gov.sk.ca.