

# SAFETY | WORKS

A Publication of the Public Services Health & Safety Association

Volume 1, No. 1 - November 2010

## Focus on Education



### Reduce Back and Shoulder Injuries through Participatory Ergonomics

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) consistently rank as the number one workplace injury in Ontario, with the highest frequency and the highest direct costs. Among PSHSA clients, that amounts to more than 9000 claims a year - 27% of all MSD claims in the province.

Lower back and shoulder injuries are the most prevalent cause of MSDs. They account for 28% of all lost time injuries. While the healthcare sector has the highest total number of injuries, largely due to client handling activities, MSDs are also a leading cause of injury among municipalities and educators.

The good news is that there are proven, successful ergonomic interventions to prevent MSDs. One approach, participatory ergonomics (PE), empowers workers to actively

contribute to improvements in their workplace ergonomics. It combines specialist expertise with frontline workers' knowledge and experience about their tools, machines and job tasks.

Involving workers to identify, assess and control workplace hazards results in improved worker safety, greater collaboration and buy-in into solutions, increased job satisfaction, and enhanced worker confidence and competency.

#### Recognizing Workers as Experts

"The PE model recognizes workers as the experts and puts them at the centre of the process," says Derek Morgan, an ergonomics consultant with PSHSA's team in the Halton-Peel region. ...See page 9

Welcome to the education issue of **SafetyWorks**, a publication from the Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA), a Health and Safety Ontario partner. SafetyWorks addresses prevention issues in the public services to help you keep up to date on what is happening in health and safety in Ontario and across the country.

PSHSA is a organization with a lot of history, formed through the amalgamation of the Ontario Safety Association for Community and Healthcare (OSACH), Education Safety Association of Ontario (ESAO) and Municipal Health and Safety Association (MHSA). This newsletter is published in three editions, each combining articles and resources with sector-specific information.



Copies of all three newsletters are available on our website at [www.healthandsafetyontario.ca](http://www.healthandsafetyontario.ca).



**ESAO**  
The EDUCATION  
SAFETY ASSOCIATION  
of ONTARIO



YOUR PARTNERS IN PREVENTION

# Your Partner in Health and Safety

– a new organization with deep roots

The Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHSA), a Health and Safety Ontario partner, serves more than 9,000 organizations and 1.2 million workers in municipalities, universities and colleges, hospitals, long-term care homes, school boards, police and emergency services, and community care providers. Located across the province, our consulting teams provide prevention and safety advice, information and training based on best practices and ongoing research.

## Specialized Services & Expertise

PSHSA consultants come from a range of disciplines, from ergonomics and occupational hygiene, to infection control and public health, to emergency services and special education. Our regional teams bring together sector-specific experience with expertise in common workplace hazards such as musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), slips and falls, workplace violence, and motor vehicle incidents.

Whether you need strategic assessment and planning support or help with tactical implementation, our consultants work with you to deliver tailored, cost-effective solutions to make your workplace safer and healthier. From basic certification to specialized hands-on training, PSHSA courses can be delivered on-site, at regional training centres, or on-line. We offer hundreds of products, from free, downloadable “Fast Facts” to comprehensive tools, manuals and DVDs. PSHSA strives to be your local “go-to” organization for public service health and safety information, programs and services across Ontario.

## Road to Zero Goals: No Injuries, Illness or Fatalities

It's everyone's right to know that they will be returned home safely to the most important people in their life. Yet each day in Ontario hundreds end up injured or sick. As part of Health and Safety Ontario, our goal is to create a future where workplaces are free from fatalities, injury and disease. Our vision is driven by one simple but compelling idea: the only acceptable number of workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities is zero.

Over the last several years we have made great strides in health and safety in the public services in Ontario. Each year, there are fewer lost-time injuries, severities, and fatalities in the workplace – but we're working to eliminate them completely. Our target is a 35% reduction in lost-time injuries by 2012.

Investing in health and safety pays off in reduced workplace incidents, lost-time injury claims, and employee absences. Looking ahead to 2011 we are committed to enhancing our programs and working closely with partners and clients to focus on areas where we can have the greatest impact. We continue to build our organization, and we strive to deliver leading, evidence based and innovative approaches to address workplace hazards.

For more information on how we can support your workplace safety and prevention efforts, please contact our main office at 416-250-2131 (1-877-250-7444), visit our web site at [www.healthandsafetyontario.ca](http://www.healthandsafetyontario.ca), or click here to find the [PSHSA field consultant](#) in your area.

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# Violence in the Workplace

While the education sector continues to have one of the lowest injury rates in the province, workplace violence is an issue that has been gaining growing attention. Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) recently changed regarding provisions for workplace violence and the Act now requires all employers to develop and communicate workplace violence and harassment prevention policies and programs and to conduct workplace risk assessments.

Significantly, by bringing workplace violence and harassment protections under the jurisdiction of the *Act*, workers now have the right to refuse work if they believe that they are in imminent danger of workplace violence.

## Special Attention for Classroom Safety

Although violence is no more prevalent in Ontario's education sector than it is in society at large, a degree of extra scrutiny and enhanced vigilance is perhaps understandable. Ontario schools are responsible for 2 million students five days a week during the school year. The school system is also a large employer in the province with 72 school boards, more than 215,000 educators and thousands of educational assistants.

All school boards have policies and procedures in place to manage violent events, and many resource manuals and best practices guides already available. However, managing the threat of violence in the education sector presents some particular challenges with respect to the new rights and obligations under the *Act*.

Different school boards will manage compliance differently according to their particular locations, circumstances and resources.

As PSHSA Regional Director Alain Chenard explains, what works for the urban, concentrated Toronto District School Board will not necessarily work for the Near North District School Board, which manages 41 schools spread out over a large area surrounding North Bay.

## Risk Assessments

The new legislation requires employers to complete a risk assessment and, given the diversity of situations that might occur, PSHSA encourages all organizations to consider four types of workplace violence. These include situations involving a person with no relationship to the workplace, situations involving a student or family member, employee or former employees as well as situations of domestic violence.

For students from the Special Education stream who may elicit responsive and/or aggressive behaviours, anticipating, interpreting and managing their behaviour in a general classroom setting can present unique challenges. PSHSA is working with its partners to enhance the range of services on aggressive/responsive behaviours and improve the training and support available to school boards and their staff and students to stay safe.

Beyond the classroom, schools are often at the heart of the communities they serve and this may pose unique risks. They often host after-hours events, sometimes involving children with minimal supervision. In these

circumstances, basic building security issues such as building access and parking lot lighting is adequately lit at night all come into play.

## Workplace Safety for Education Assistants

While the requirements of the Education Act obligate educators to exercise a duty of care towards their students, preventing them from accessing the right to refuse under the OHSA, those restrictions do not apply to educational assistants (EAs). EAs are not educators under the Education Act and they are free to exercise their rights to lodge a complaint or to refuse unsafe work under the OHSA.

To ensure the safety of their EAs and prevent complaints or work refusals, schools should consider reviewing or updating their violence programs, including:

- Completing a risk assessment;
- Developing written policies and programs for dealing with aggressive behaviours;
- Developing comprehensive Individual Education Plans for each special needs student with a multi-disciplinary team that includes the EA, parents and associated experts;
- Ensuring all EA's have appropriate training to deal with the type of exceptional student they are working with, putting a focus on preventing an aggressive event;
- Maintaining accurate training records.

### Resources

PSHSA has a large and growing list of resources to support employers and workers on workplace violence including: Violence Prevention in Education, Safety in Special Education, Workplace Violence Prevention and Working Alone. For information on these services visit [www.healthandsafetyontario.ca](http://www.healthandsafetyontario.ca), contact us at 416-250-2131 (1-877-250-7444), or click here for a list of [PSHSA field consultants](#).

# Avoiding THE FLU



Influenza affects approximately 10% of all Ontarians each year. While there are three known types of influenza viruses, most seasonal outbreaks and epidemics are associated with Influenza A and B. Generally, symptoms resulting from Influenza A exposure are more severe and frequently lead to hospitalization for those at risk. H1N1 is a novel influenza A virus that originated in Mexico in 2009 and quickly spread around the world, accounting for more than 18,000 deaths.

Influenza is transmitted through the air by droplets and small particles excreted by infected individuals who cough or sneeze. It can also be contracted by touching contaminated hard surfaces such as door knobs or telephones. The virus enters the body through the nose or throat where it incubates for 1-4 days before symptoms develop.

The contagious period of the flu can last from the day before symptoms develop up to an additional 7 days following the onset of illness.

How you can help prevent illness in yourself and others:

- Wash your hands frequently and or use an alcohol hand sanitizer
- Avoid handling soiled tissue and objects used by an ill person

- Cover your mouth and nose with your arm/sleeve whenever you cough or sneezes
- Stay home if you are sick
- If you work in the health care sector, follow Routine Practices and Additional Precautions
- Get an annual flu shot

## Who should get a Flu Shot?

If you interact regularly with the public or have contact with high risk individuals, you should consider getting the flu shot. Similarly, if you have a chronic health condition, you are pregnant or you have contact with children under the age of four, you should consider a flu shot for both yourself and your family.

The seasonal trivalent vaccine for 2010-2011 incorporates the pandemic 2009 influenza A (H1N1) (pH1N1) component, a new influenza A component (H3N2) and the same B component as last year.

## Resources

Public Health Agency of Canada: [www.fightflu.ca](http://www.fightflu.ca)

Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Flu Information: [www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca)



## ON THE RADAR:

Ministry of Labour Heightened Enforcement Campaign

**November 1 - December 31, 2010**

## Enforcement Blitz Targets Conveyor Hazards

Ministry of Labour inspectors will focus on lockout and guarding hazards involving conveyor systems from November 1 to December 31 2010 during stepped-up activity at industrial workplaces across Ontario.

For more information, visit the [Ministry of Labour Website - English](#) or [Ministry of Labour Website - French](#). Download [poster](#).



## Workplace Violence

Effective June 15, 2010, the *Ontario Occupational Health & Safety Act* includes employer responsibilities for addressing violence, harassment and domestic violence in the workplace.

Among the amendments is a new requirement for employers to prepare a written workplace violence and harassment policy; to review this policy annually; and to post the policy in the workplace. Earlier this year PSHSA led Health and Safety Ontario's efforts to support workplaces in implementing the new Bill. A full suite of products is now available. Working with workplace violence experts and clients, PSHSA continues to develop our programs aimed at adopting leading practices, supporting culture change, reducing workplace violence and addressing aggressive behaviours.

For more information please see:

PSHSA [Workplace Violence Products and Services](#)

PSHSA Fast Fact: [Workplace Violence: Complying with the Occupational Health & Safety Act](#).

Ontario Legislation: [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca).

## Bill 64: Scented Products in the Workplace

Earlier this year Bill 64, the *Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act* (Scented Products), was introduced in the Provincial Legislature.

To date, the Bill has only received first reading, which took place in May 2010. However, PSHSA continues to monitor the Bill. If successful it will introduce new requirements for workplaces to prepare a written policy on the use of scented products in the workplace and develop and maintain a program to implement the policy.

The Bill aims to ensure that all employers consult employees regarding an appropriate scent program for their workplace and does not require the adoption of a specific policy. Concerns around environmental sensitivities in the workplace have existed for some

time and growing number of workplaces, schools and hospitals in Canada are addressing the issue by implementing scent-free policies.

Regardless of whether the Bill is passed or not, employers may want to consider their policies with respect to possible human rights issues related to environmental sensitivities.

PSHSA will continue to monitor Bill 64. For more information please see:

- Legislative Assembly of Ontario - [Bill 64, Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act \(Scented Products\), 2010](#)
- CCOHS - [Scent-Free Policy for the Workplace](#)
- Canadian Human Rights Commission – [2007 Policy on Environmental Sensitivities](#)

## Control of Exposure to Biological or Chemical Agents – Regulation 833

Effective July 1, 2010, the Occupational Exposure Limits (OELs) for 36 hazardous substances has changed. The changes include:

- Adding exposure limits for two new substances (butenes and PVC)
- Revising limits or information listings for 23 substances
- Withdrawing specific exposure limits for 11 substances that will be regulated either under a different substance or calculation method or because the ACGIH found a lack of information to support an OEL
- The existing limits for two other substances included in the 2009 consultation – beryllium and sulphur dioxide, will be maintained pending further consultation and review.

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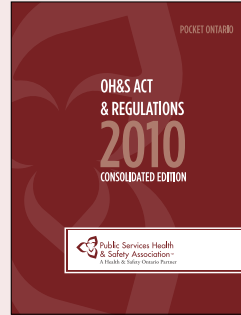
- The format for Regulation 833 now has two separate tables of exposure limits: 1) Ontario Table of Occupational Exposure Limits (first place to check for substances), and 2) the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) ACGIH table, directly from the ACGIH Threshold Limit Values (TLV)-2009.

For more information about the changes and how they apply to your organization, see [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca).

## Designated Substances Regulation 490/09

Regulations for 11 of the 12 stand-alone designated substances regulations have been consolidated and streamlined into the new Designated Substances regulation. This consolidation maintains existing worker protections for exposure to these substances, while making access and compliance easier for employers, as they will now consult two regulations instead of twelve. (Regulation 278/05, Asbestos on Construction Project and in Buildings and Repair Operations, was not consolidated.) See [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca).

## PSHSA Product Highlight



### 2010 OH&S Act and Regulations Consolidated Edition

Prepared by Carswell, this consolidated edition of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations* is a handy reference tool for any workplace. It has been revised to reflect all amendments made up to January 9, 2010, including:

- Violence and Harassment in the Workplace: Bill 168 (S.O. 2009, c. 23)
- Exposure Limits: O. Reg. 491/09
- Construction: O. Reg. 443/09 amends O. Reg. 213/91
- Needle Safety: O. Reg. 439/09 amends O. Reg. 474/07

The cost is \$23 plus tax, shipping and handling). To purchase, visit our store at <http://store.osach.ca> and type "OHS Act" into the Search Engine.

## Visiting Us on the Web

We have a new website, [www.healthandsafetyontario.ca](http://www.healthandsafetyontario.ca), which will become the new and improved portal for all of our health, community care, education, municipal and provincial services clients.

However, in the meantime, while we work to consolidate all the information from our three legacy websites ([www.osach.ca](http://www.osach.ca), [www.esao.on.ca](http://www.esao.on.ca), [www.mhsao.com](http://www.mhsao.com)), you will still be able to access the resources from each of these sites individually.

We hope to make the transition to a single site as seamless as possible for you, however, if you cannot find information or need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact one of our regional consultants for assistance.



# Preparing for Winter: Avoiding Winter Slips and Falls



We all know that as the temperature drops, the number of slips and falls rises. Winter brings wet, icy or snowy conditions which can be dangerous and everyone needs to take the right precautions.

As “hearty Canadians” we often assume we can easily navigate these conditions, or we are in a hurry to get somewhere else and are most vulnerable to slips and falls. But according to WSIB statistics, slips, trips and falls cause almost 20 percent of all injuries in Ontario. With the average slip, trip or fall costing an employer an estimated \$2,000 in direct WSIB costs and a total of \$22,000 in total direct and indirect costs, they can be a costly hazard to ignore.

## **Our top tips for avoiding slips and falls during the winter season:**

- Select proper footwear. Rubber or neoprene composite soles provide better traction on ice and snow than leather. The tread design, a raised cross-hatched pattern, is ideal and the larger the area of contact between the shoe and walking surface the better.
- Consider winter traction aids, strap-on non-slip shoes, as an alternative.
- Be prepared for slippery conditions; be aware of surface conditions and slow down.
- Take your time. It takes more time to navigate winter walkways safely. So, plan your route and take extra time to get there; avoid rushing or taking shortcuts over snow piles or walking where snow or ice removal is incomplete.
- Increase your stability. If you have no choice but to walk on a slippery surface, bend slightly forward and shorten your stride for better stability.

- Use caution around vehicles. Many slips and falls occur during entry or exit from vehicles. Consider holding onto your vehicle for support.
- In addition, make sure access to and into your building is safe.

## **Keep all parking lots and walkways clear:**

- Clear ice and snow before workers will be entering or exiting the parking lot.
- Consider having containers of sand strategically placed for anyone to sprinkle on wet or icy patches
- Provide good lighting and clear path markings at all lots and walkways.
- Clearly identify steps, ramps, and other elevation changes and take extra steps to make sure these are clear from snow and ice

## **Tips for when entering a building:**

- Remove snow off the bottom of your footwear and take advantage of floor mats to remove any moisture from the soles of your footwear.
- Avoid walking on wet or slippery areas if possible.
- Take responsibility for immediately reporting slip and fall hazards.

PSHSA has a number of resources to help you prevent slips and falls this winter. Call our consultants in your area or check online for training videos and other resources.

For more information, contact us at 416-250-2131 (1-877-250-7444) or click here for a list of [PSHSA field consultants](#).



# Practice Ladder Safety

**E**very year in Ontario, more than 800 lost-time injuries are caused by ladder incidents.

Ladders are the most common type of equipment used to access out of reach areas—thousands are used every working day. More than 80% of ladder accidents are related to the improper use or application of ladders and associated equipment.

The extensive use of ladders across most workplaces and the high rates of ladder-accident related lost-time injuries and suffering point to the need for increased training and supervision. Ladder injuries can be significantly reduced by carrying out a combination of training, regular reinforcement of the training and site control of all operations involving ladders.

## Ladder Safety Basics

- Always maintain three points of contact on the ladder and keep your belt buckle between the sides of the ladder.
- Consider using other types of access equipment such as scaffolds or powered elevating platforms.
- Between 30% and 40% of all ladder accidents involve unexplained loss of footing. Worker inattention, improper footwear, dirty treads or rungs, objects on treads or rungs, and damaged surfaces are commonly listed factors. Pre-task inspections can help reduce these risks.
- Many ladder accidents are related to unfavorable weather conditions. Wind, mud, ice, snow and rain can create slippery and unstable situations. This is an especially important consideration for custodial personnel clearing roofs and performing routine

maintenance tasks and for outside tradesmen and contractors working on your site.

- A large number of these accidents occur because workers used straight and extension ladders that are not secured. Proper ladder positioning, anchoring and top tie-offs are standard techniques use to prevent ladder accidents. Site supervisors must ensure ladders are either firmly secured or held in place by a second worker.

## Management Diligence

To maintain legal compliance and demonstrate positive diligence, management must ensure that supervisory staff understand and follow a comprehensive ladder safety program. All workers should be trained on how to maintain and use ladders properly and training should be documented. Supervisors should evaluate the requirements of each task to be done and ensure that the best equipment and best means of access is chosen for the job.

Your comprehensive ladder safety program should include:

- An assessment of the task to be completed to ensure a ladder is the most appropriate type of equipment to use
- Worker training on the use of your ladders and mobile stands as per the manufacturer's instructions—including how to select the right ladder for each task or job
- Proper equipment maintenance
- Proper securing and positioning of ladders

PSHSA can provide you with additional resources and training on ladder safety. Click here for a list of [PSHSA field consultants](#).

### ...Cover story continued

Morgan is a veteran of the Ergonomics Program Implementation Continuum (EPIC) pilot program, which successfully road-tested PE techniques for one year at six healthcare facilities in Ontario in 2009.

PSHSA is now building on these successes to extend the program across the province and make it available to all of our clients.

### Managing Change and Building Buy-In

According to Morgan, the success of ergonomic interventions generally relies on the degree of worker involvement in the process. Higher worker involvement consistently leads to higher measurable and sustainable change.

However, there are obstacles to facilitating effective worker participation. It is critical to manage initial changes carefully and keep a tight focus, says Morgan. It's best to choose just a couple of items from the workers' wish list that can be dealt with effectively and expeditiously. "Those first few changes are really going to have a big impact," says Morgan. "If people don't buy into the changes and see the value, then it takes away from the process going forward."

Securing management buy-in is equally critical. Management may have concerns about the implementation, as well as a perception that ergonomic improvements will increase costs. In fact, the participatory approach consistently yields cost effective, improved results. Drawing on the workers' knowledge of their jobs, or "integrating the frontline"—as Morgan puts it—allows workers to innovate "simple, low-cost solutions that go a long way towards handling

the issues that they are facing on a day-to-day basis."

### Sustaining a Culture of Safety

While PE is a technique to optimize frontline productivity, it also represents an important and tangible step in moving organizational culture to one that values participation, team work and collaboration among workers and reinforces a sense of community in the workplace.

Health and safety in all workplaces are enhanced in an environment of collaboration and openness, says Morgan. In the healthcare sector where EPIC was first piloted, there is a direct link between the health, safety and wellness of healthcare staff and the quality of care that they provide. "If working conditions and employee safety are not taken into account, we know that this is going to have an effect on the care that people receive."

### Resources

To assist our clients in reducing workplace MSDs, PSHSA offers a wide range of ergonomic services:

- Ergonomic Assessments to identify risk factors, determine the level of risk present in a job and provide suggestions to minimize the risk of injury
- Physical Demand Descriptions - to assess and describe the physical demands and environmental conditions associated with a job being performed
- Measurement of the Coefficient of Friction of floor surfaces - to reduce flooring-related hazards
- EPIC program implementation

Visit [www.healthandsafetyontario.ca](http://www.healthandsafetyontario.ca) for information on these services and MSD prevention. Or, contact us at 416-250-2131 (1-877-250-7444) or click here to find [PSHSA field consultant](#) in your area.

## Join the 2011 PSHSA Safety Group!

The Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHSA) invites your organization to join our 2011 Safety Group.

This is PSHSA's seventh year sponsoring a WSIB safety group. The safety group's objective is to bring similar organizations together to develop better health and safety practices. The goal is to eliminate workplace injuries and illness, and to reduce WSIB costs. This is a great opportunity to network, increase your occupational health and safety knowledge and share resources.

If you are a Schedule 1 firm paying premiums to the WSIB, and are in one of the following rate groups, consider joining the PSHSA Safety Group!

590 – Ambulance Services

810 – School Boards

817 – Educational Facilities

845 – Local Government Services

851 – Homes for Nursing Care

852 – Homes for Residential Care

853 – Hospitals 857 – Nursing Services

858 – Group Homes

861 – Treatment Clinics and Services

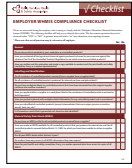
875 – Professional Offices and Agencies

Safety Group members benefit through networking and information sharing opportunities, and may also be eligible for a WSIB rebate. For instance, 2008 Safety Group members shared a rebate of \$508,131.96!

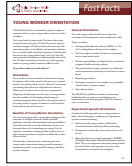
Learn more about the 2011 Safety Group [here](#).

Register for the 2011 Safety Group here: [English](#) [French](#).

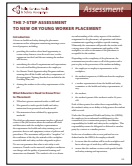
# PSHSA Product Highlight: New and Young Worker Safety



**Employer WHMIS Checklist:** Use this resource to determine your compliance level with the WHMIS Regulation.



**Fast Facts Young Worker Orientation:** This PSHSA Fast Fact sheet promotes employer awareness of how to give young workers a safe start in the workplace



**Seven Step Assessment:** This document outlines seven steps to ensure the safe placement of your co-op student.



**New Worker Health & Safety Checklist:** Designed for the new worker, this checklist outlines the common workplace health and safety hazards and control measures that an employer should have in place.



**Cooperative Education Quiz and Answer Sheets:** These quiz and answer sheets are designed to be used in conjunction with the DVD, *Who's Responsibility is it Anyway?* The answer sheets also serve as notes for the student following the DVD presentation.

## Now Available:

### Updated Workplace Violence Prevention DVD

The DVD “Workplace Violence Prevention in Health and Community Care Sector” is now available and includes information on the amendments to the *Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHS Act)* that come into effect on June 15, 2010.

The DVD also includes a more detailed section on domestic violence in the workplace and additional downloadable tools, including the Occupational Health and Safety Council of Ontario (OSHCO) Workplace Violence Prevention Series.

To purchase the DVD, visit our e-store at <http://store.osach.ca> and type “violence DVD” into the Search field (\$30 plus GST for members).

