

WCB Update

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Workers of Tomorrow promotes safety among young workers

When Stephen Nicholson stands in front of 30 or so high school students and discusses the potential dangers of workplace accidents, he isn't reading from a canned script. The conviction of his presentation is written all over his face - and the cold reality of living through a traumatic workplace accident himself.

Stephen, 25, is a survivor of a horrid experience. Six years ago, the aspiring fire fighter was on a job site cleaning an exhaust system for his employer at the time. A spark ignited invisible fumes surrounding him, causing flames to explode through the exhaust vent with Stephen trapped inside. By the time he was able to escape the vent, Stephen had suffered third degree burns to most of his body.

In an instant, his life had changed forever.



Stephen Nicholson, who survived a terrible accident as a young worker, is recovering from his burns and building a new life for himself.

Today Stephen no longer dreams of becoming a fire fighter - it is a physical impossibility. However, Stephen does feel that he can help ensure that other young workers don't have to go through what he had, by speaking on behalf of the Workers of Tomorrow Health and Safety Campaign.

The Workers of Tomorrow Health and Safety Campaign, which

receives funding by the WCB, educates and increases the awareness of injury and disease prevention to young workers (defined as workers between the ages of 15 and 24) at their schools. By alerting young people to the risks in their workplaces and how to prevent workplace accidents, campaign organizers hope to reduce the number of injuries to this demographic of workers.

"We have to help educate kids to look after themselves," says Stephen. "It's a matter of

confidence. Young workers are trying to establish themselves in the workforce, but don't want to burden supervisors or co-workers with too many questions or concerns. I didn't question anything when I was on the job. Look what happened."

Stephen adds that many young workers blindly accept that their workplace is safe, which he feels

“Our goal is to make safety a part of the collective culture of Manitoba – period.”

is one of the reasons they are so highly susceptible to workplace accidents.

Since 1989, 24 young workers in Manitoba have been killed due to a workplace accident, including two this year. There were 96,300 young workers in Manitoba in 2000 (a Federal Government Labour Force Historical Review estimate, including workers not covered by the WCB). However, the WCB received 8,866 young worker claims for the same year. As of July 31 of 2001, the WCB received 4,505 claims from young workers.

According to Ellen Olfert, coordinator of the Workers of Tomorrow Campaign, those numbers are unacceptable.

“Our campaign is all about preventing workplace accidents,” she says. “Our goal is to make safety a part of the collective culture of Manitoba – period.”

The Workers of Tomorrow Health and Safety Campaign began in 1997 as a two-month pilot project linked to the Tag Day Campaign and the Day of Mourning and Remembrance. Originally offered to eight schools in Manitoba, the campaign gained swift commendations from educators. By the 1998-99 school year, the campaign commenced its first provincial pilot project, and has been evolving ever since.

“Although the presentations now feature hands-on experience with protective equipment, a video and a booklet, the campaign achieves its real impact from the presenters,” Ellen says.

Growing from a list of merely eight speakers during its inception, the campaign now

features over 100 volunteer speakers from a wide range of backgrounds.

To better relate to their audiences, some speakers come from specific vocational backgrounds while some come from specific geographic locations. Like Stephen, most speakers have suffered on-the-job accidents as young workers, while others have lost family members to job-related accidents. There is even a strong contingent of employer health and safety committee and safety association members.

According to Ellen, the campaign reaches as many students as resources allow. For instance, in 1999-2000, presentations were made to 6,311 students, while 5,355 students saw the presentations in 2000-2001.

“We hope to reach between 7,500 and 10,000 students this coming year,” she says. “There are no other programs in Manitoba providing this information to young workers.”

According to Ellen, both student and teacher feedback of the program has been exceptional.

Students who have previously received the Workers of Tomorrow Health and Safety Campaign presentations have stated both verbally and on evaluation forms that the presentations served to make them aware that there were risks in the workplace. Many resolved that they would be more cautious at work. Teachers have reported that in days following the presentation, their students discuss the presentations at length.

Ellen stresses that the WCB and the Workplace Health and Safety

Division have been extremely helpful, by sharing information, resources and guidance.

“The WCB and WS&H Division have been extremely supportive of the Workers of Tomorrow Health and Safety Campaign. The sharing of resources and information have helped to strengthen the campaign.”

“Network and promotion go hand-in-hand in building the strength of a campaign such as ours.”

The Workers of Tomorrow Health and Safety Campaign is also partially supported by the Manitoba Federation of Labour and the Winnipeg Boys and Girls Club.

Although the campaign targets young workers and future young workers in their schools, Ellen says that the campaign would also consider going to workplaces to make presentations. If you would like to arrange a Workers of Tomorrow presentation at your workplace, call Ellen at (204) 992-2988.

A long-term objective of the campaign is to provide Workers of Tomorrow Health and Safety to all secondary school students, post-secondary school students and training program participants.

Another long-term objective is to work together with networks and partners to encourage the inclusion of health and safety as part of the secondary school curriculum.

Ultimately, the campaign hopes to see a marked decrease in the number and severity of workplace accidents involving young workers within the next 10 years.

WCB info kits help employers and workers through reporting process



WCB staff (l to r) Jackie Matiation, Heidi Kozak, Norrie Figueroa and Teresa Besant urge all employers to prominently display decals informing their workers that they work for a WCB-covered firm. Almost half of all workers aren't aware of this important fact.

Manitoba workplaces will receive a special package from the WCB this month - an information package that represents a new way of doing business with the WCB while allowing easier access to the information injured workers need.

This new package will be distributed to all WCB-covered workplaces in Manitoba. The packages contain all WCB claim-related material, such as a sample supply of posters, brochures and reporting cards. The number to order an additional supply is printed on the kit. As well, the 250 largest employers that represent 60 percent of all WCB claims will receive a display stand to house the materials. A video and CD will follow.

"It's an empowerment tool to help employers communicate to employees about WCB services," says Don Paul, Vice-President of Rehabilitation and Compensation Services. "The net gain is that employers and workers will have a better understanding of our coverage, and reporting process."

The posters promote the steps to take when workers become injured at work, including how to utilize the WCB's phone-in Claims Information Centre. Phone numbers and the WCB Claims Information Centre's hours of operation are also included.

Two brochures for workers are included in the kit, Reporting a Claim and Claims and Coverage Information. The Reporting a Claim brochure outlines the basic steps that must be followed in the event of a workplace injury. The responsibilities of the worker, employer and healthcare provider are detailed. As well, the brochure explains how the WCB claims process works once a claim is initiated. The Claims and Coverage Information brochure provides brief descriptions of the types of coverage workers can expect if they become injured on the job.

Reporting cards outline the basic steps to follow in the event of a workplace injury. Employers can provide these to their workers when they're first hired or when

they experience an accident.

Finally, the packages contain decals to let workers know that they work for a WCB-covered business. Research has shown that approximately 50 percent of workers at WCB-covered workplaces do not know they have coverage.

The tool kit is the latest initiative by the WCB to help expedite and simplify accident reporting for employers, workers and healthcare specialists. The Facts by Fax program, which began last fall, encouraged healthcare professionals to fax accident reports. Accident forms are also available on the WCB web site (www.wcb.mb.ca) for healthcare professionals to fill out and fax to the WCB. Online accident forms for employers and workers are now available on the WCB web site as well.

The WCB is currently developing a web-based application that will allow employers and health care providers to report accidents online. Registered users will be able to securely input accident and wage information into an easy to follow accident-reporting screen and then submit it over the web.

In December of this year, this service will be offered through a pilot program with selected employers. After the pilot phase is complete, likely in the spring of 2002, the on-line service will be offered to all employers. This service will also be made available to healthcare providers at the same time. A comprehensive registration process coupled with the latest in technology will ensure the confidentiality of information submitted.

Please visit www.wcb.mb.ca for more information as it becomes available.

U of M conducts return to work study

The University of Manitoba is conducting a study on how physicians can aid in the return to work of persons with soft tissue injuries.

The study, which begins as a six-month pilot trial, will assess the effectiveness of a work accommodation form. The work accommodation form is aimed at improving the effective participation of employers and physicians in returning injured workers to employment following a workplace accident. The pilot portion of the study begins this October in Steinbach.

Researchers have identified the facilitators and barriers to effective physician participation in the return to work process following soft tissue injuries. Some barriers identified include the nature and prognosis of the injury to the worker, the ability of the workplace to accommodate the injured worker, and the physician's awareness of their role in the return to work process helps the process.

For back issues of Update, check out the Publications section of WCB Online at www.wcb.mb.ca

Annual Firms: Please review your estimate of worker earnings

Please review your current year's estimate of worker earnings if you report your workers earnings to the WCB annually. If a revision is required to your estimate, please submit the revision to the Employer Services Division:

175 Hargrave Street
5th Floor
Winnipeg, MB R3C 3R8

Toll Free Phone: 1-888-504-1339
Phone: 954-4505
Fax : 954-4900

Why should I revise my estimate?

Under subsection 80(6.1) – if your actual earnings reported are greater than the annual estimate, interest will be levied on the difference in assessment.

Under subsection 80(6.2) – if your actual earnings reported are less than the annual estimate, interest will be credited to your file.

When can I submit a revision?

Any time during the current calendar year by contacting the Employer Services Division.

Please Note

Any revisions to your estimate, which would result in a debit or credit of less than \$50.00 of the original assessment, will not be processed. This will not result in an interest penalty.

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