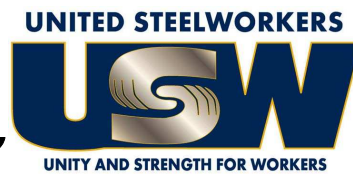


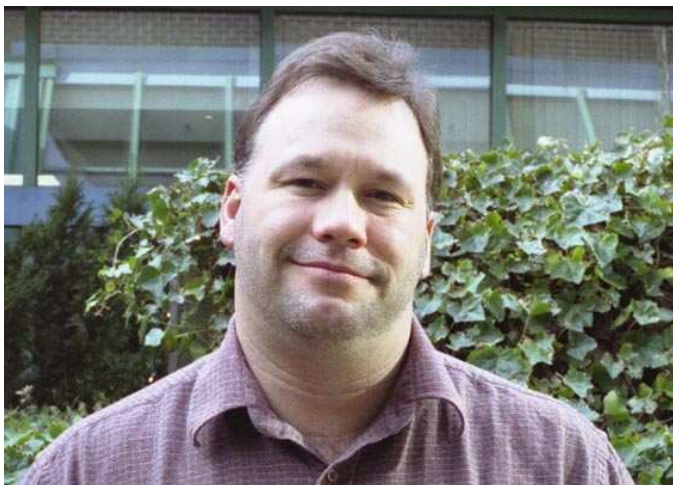


SafeTalk



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Calgary Herald Exposes Alberta's Health & Safety



Jeff Kallichuk the District staff rep. in the Edmonton area said "the report shows it is clear where the Government of Alberta's focus is at in respect to the health, safety and protection of working men and women of this province. The lack of any type of government intervention, even though the legislation to protect workers exists, to deal with workplace injury and/or death shows that the Government is more committed to business rather than the worker."

The recent Calgary Herald four part special report on health and safety in Alberta workplaces called "Worked to Death" is forcing the provincial government to take notice. Just days after the report was published Employment Minister Thomas Lukaszuk vowed to publicly release the names this fall of Alberta employers with the worst safety records.

Excerpts from the report;

Part 1 Prosecution

Today, workplace safety is facing new scrutiny across Alberta. The provincial auditor general recently found "serious weaknesses" in how the Alberta government deals with persistent offenders. A year-long Herald investigation of 208 worker deaths has also uncovered disturbing flaws in Alberta's enforcement system.

Among the issues:

- * The Herald examined every workplace death since 2003 where fatality reports were made public. Provincial investigators found safety violations or problems in three-quarters of the deaths, yet only a third of those cases were taken to court.

- * Even if a company is found guilty in a worker's death, the government can't guarantee fines are paid.

Part 2 Government

This year, about 1,900 Alberta employers have been flagged with substandard safety records, a figure that's surged by a third in the past 10 years.

Coming Events

July 7-8 SAFER Advanced H&S Training, Cranbrook, BC

Aug 9 International Day of World's Indigenous People

Sept 12-14 SFL H&S Conference, Regina Sask.

Oct. 4-8 USW International HS&E Conference, Pittsburg Pa.

Nearly 300 have been on the Workers' Compensation Board's poor performers list for at least half a decade.

Yet, eight years after the provincial government passed legislation allowing it to publicize which companies hold the worst safety records, it continues to fight against releasing the information.

Part 3 Companies

Yet, trouble can flourish in a system that downloads some of the riskiest work to some of the smallest companies, or where so many people answer to so many bosses.

A Herald analysis of on-the-job deaths between 2003 and 2009 shows more than half involved sites with contractors.

Of 100 workplace deaths where multiple employers were on the scene, almost three-quarters saw some kind of safety breach or problem, according to government fatality reports.

The Herald's study shows potential pitfalls on subcontracting sites can imperil workers' lives, including:

- * Workers from different companies often have different rules for getting the job done. In 2003, Harvey Ruth died after falling from scaffolding onto the concrete floor of a swimming pool construction site in northern Alberta. Six employers were on site, but provincial investigators said there was no system in place to make sure workplace safety laws were followed by all the companies.

- * Large businesses often hire smaller ones to meet tight deadlines or handle specialized, and sometimes dangerous, chores. In the oilpatch, small- and mid-sized firms are employed to manage highly pressured natural gas wells in a process called snubbing. In 2004, Matthew Schwartz was killed when the snubbing rig he was working on near Sundre was engulfed in flames, triggering major changes in the sector.

Part 4 Young and Old

A one-time provincial prosecutor in workplace deaths says the Crown is reluctant to take safety violators to court, unwilling to properly deal with grieving families and has failed for years to adequately track whether convicted offenders are paying their fines.

Speaking publicly for the first time, former Crown lawyer Tamara Trull said she repeatedly raised these concerns with her superiors, but her calls for change went unheeded.

There's "a reluctance to prosecute cases that, in my legal opinion, should have been prosecuted," said Trull, one of Alberta's first designated Crown attorneys of workplace safety offences. She quit in frustration in late 2007. For the full report go to: <http://www.calgaryherald.com/worked-to-death/index.html>

HAZARD ALERT

Injury Type : Close call

Core Activity : Forklift operation

A forklift was moving pallets of flooring tile when the stack (3 high) immediately to the left collapsed. The propane tank at the back of the forklift was crushed. The building was evacuated until the propane had dissipated.

Injury Type : Temporary loss of consciousness, wrist injuries

Core Activity : Log hauling

A worker struck a stake release lever on an off-highway log truck with a hammer while trying to remove the keeper pin with his other hand in order to trip the opposite bunk. The keeper pin came loose and the stake release lever released. The release lever struck the worker's hand, and the hammer struck his head, knocking him unconscious.

Injury Type : Fatal

Core Activity : Loading and unloading goods

The driver of a tractor-trailer unit pulled away from the check-in point into a container yard. A young worker who was positioned between the rear trailer wheels was fatally injured.

Injury Type : Severe laceration to hand

Core Activity : Steel or metal wholesale

A worker was jogging a recoiler to position the tail end of the roll for taping when one of the worker's hands was caught between a separator guide and a metal coil roll.

Injury Type : Minor concussion, neck and back pain

Core Activity : Mechanical tree falling

A feller/buncher lost control of a tree being felled, which then landed on the cab of the machine. The worker's head struck the door.

Injury Type : Bruised neck

Core Activity : Sawmill

A worker was walking through a mill when he saw a jam-up on a wood chip conveyor belt. As he was clearing the jam-up on the running belt with a pike pole, the tip of the pole was caught by the belt and rapidly advanced toward the worker. The other end of the pike pole became jammed under an overhead catwalk, pinning the worker against a nearby structure with the pole across his neck. The conveyor motor tripped out but the worker was unable to free himself. He was pinned in this position for about 15 minutes, until he was able to use his cell phone to contact a family member who then contacted the mill.

Injury Type : Fatal

Core Activity : Integrated forest management

A felled tree hit and broke off the top portion of an adjacent standing tree. The broken top struck the faller's head, which was under-hung from a 6-ton overhead travelling bridge crane.

Injury Type : Crushed fingers

Core Activity : Punch press operation

A worker was clearing parts from a punch press when he inadvertently activated the press with a foot pedal.

Working outdoors puts many at high risk for skin cancer

If you work outdoors, you have a high risk for developing skin cancer because you are regularly exposed to the sun for long periods of time, according to the Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA).

Adding to the danger for outdoor workers is the fact that you are often in the sun during those times in the day when the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which will harm the skin, is at its strongest, between 12 noon and 2 pm.

The CDA is focusing on sun safety for outdoor workers during its National Sun Awareness Campaign now underway. The good news is that skin cancer is largely preventable. You can protect yourself in these ways:

- Try to limit the amount of time you work outdoors in the sun from 11 am to 4 pm.
- Seek shade from buildings, trees, canopies, etc, as much as possible, especially during lunch and coffee breaks.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat (more than 8 cm or 3 inches). Attach a back flap to a construction helmet to cover the back of the neck and a visor for the front of the face.
- Wear clothing that covers as much of the body as possible. Fabrics which do not let light through work best. Make sure clothing is loose and comfortable.
- Apply an SPF 30 or higher, broad spectrum (protects against UVA and UVB) sunscreen to all exposed areas of skin before you go outside.
- Reapply at midday or more often if you are perspiring heavily. Apply a broad spectrum, SPF 30 lip balm.

New Safety Laws Could mean Jail For Railway Executives

A steep increase in rail accidents over the last decade is pushing the federal government to bring in tough new penalties for railway companies caught breaking safety rules.

Rob Merrifield, the minister of state for transport, announced recently the new legislation will include protections for whistleblowers and greater financial and legal penalties for violations.

The changes would designate one railway executive legally responsible for safety, and the minister suggested the person could possibly face jail time if rules were broken.

"Let's hope not," Merrifield said, when asked if rail executives might go to jail if safety rules were violated.

"What we're really wanting to do is to make sure that they have a culture of safety within the company and if you are saying there's one person deemed to have that responsibility there's a lot more chance that's actually going to happen."

Merrifield said that until now, there have been few penalties and no repercussions for railways that violate safety laws.

The changes are the result of two separate reviews on railway safety, completed in 2008.

The first advisory panel report made 56 recommendations to improve safety, while a Commons committee report made another 14 recommendations.

The studies were launched after deadly rail accidents in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec.