

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS'
WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY INITIATIVE
REGIONAL FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS
SUMMARY REPORT**

This report provides a high level overview of the regional focus group sessions. It includes information about who attended these sessions and the feedback they provided.

1. REGIONAL FOCUS GROUP SESSION ATTENDANCE

In June and September, 2005, over 200 stakeholders from the following categories participated in regional consultation sessions held in Richmond, Vancouver, Abbotsford, Nanaimo, Kelowna, Nelson, Cranbrook, Fort St. John, Terrace and Prince George:

Category	Number of Attendees
Prior claimants	9
Worker for large company	37
Worker for medium company	15
Worker for small company	5
Labour union or other worker association	33
Worker community total	99
Management for large company	44
Management for medium company	17
Management for small company	12
Employer Association	15
Employer community total	88
Joint health and safety association	22
Total participation in all sessions	209

2. REGIONAL FOCUS GROUP SESSION FEEDBACK

GENERALLY

- There was much discussion about WorkSafeBC – what is working well and what could be improved in the future. There was less discussion about the roles of other stakeholders such as workers, employers, associations, unions.
- There is a need for education and public awareness about (1) the prevalence and effect of work-related injury and disease and (2) workplace health and safety standards. This could be accomplished through education system, media, and publications but not the internet
- There is a need for personal responsibility and action (e.g., personal protective equipment)

EMERGING TRENDS

- Increase in the number of contractors and small businesses, some of whom don't know about their workplace health and safety responsibilities
- Increase in the number of young and unskilled workers and thus, the need for training
- Increase in the prevalence of ESL and illiteracy and thus, the need for face-to-face or pictorial communication
- Shrinking operational budgets and/or earnings and thus, an ongoing conflict between production and safety

REGULATIONS, COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

Regulations

- Desire for hard copy of regulations
- Preference for prescriptive regulations [Note: Symposium and survey results indicated a preference for a mix of prescriptive and performance-based regulations]
- Desire for an improved variance system or tiered regulations
- Desire for financial incentives for organizations that adopt standards above and beyond those in the regulations

Compliance

- Desire for more field officers, especially to inspect small operations
- Desire for more consultation capacity within WorkSafeBC (especially for small businesses) and for the division of responsibility between education and enforcement
- Desire for consistent interpretation and application of regulations

Enforcement

- Need for greater enforcement against repeat offenders (e.g., steep slope roofers); supervisors and employers who engage in discriminatory practices; and the deadly sins / killer contraventions
- Support fines / tickets against workers [Note: Survey results on this issue were mixed]
- Need for advertising of enforcement plan and actions to deter non-compliance

ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Associations

- Support for industry-based associations taking on more responsibility for education and consultation but need to ensure that such associations represent and communicate effectively with both workers and employers [Note: Survey results indicated that caution is warranted in this area]

Auditors

- Support for auditing used through COR program from those stakeholders who were familiar with it [Note: Survey results indicated that audits should not be used instead of WorkSafeBC inspections]

WorkSafeBC

- WorkSafeBC should retain its enforcement function

Workers

- Many workers are unaware of their right / responsibility to refuse unsafe work; those who know about this ability are reluctant to exercise it for fear of discrimination; and those who suffer discrimination are not reporting it to WorkSafeBC

Employers

- Should be more vigilant about offering and/or funding effective safety training and disciplining workers who engage in unsafe practices

Large employers

- Should take more responsibility for the safety of the workers of their contactors or sub-contractors (e.g., by setting pre-qualification standards, monitoring their injury rates, and/or offering them training)

INCREASING AWARENESS

- Personal stories from an injured worker are the most powerful; WorkSafeBC should hire some injured workers to engage in speaking tours (especially in the school system)
- The key to cultural change lies in the education system; teaching safety to (1) young children who will make it a way of life; (2) trades people who should start work with a basic level of knowledge; and (3) supervisors, managers, and CEOs who are responsible for work processes and organizational culture
- Media campaigns are most effective to reach the public at large; work-related injuries, diseases and deaths should make the front-page news and television advertisements and/or videos are very effective

For detailed summaries from each of the regional sessions, contact the BOD Office at 604-276-3055 or FUTUREHS@worksafebc.com.