

7-ELEVEN CANADA INC.

Burnaby, BC

Safety made convenient

One of the biggest challenges facing 7-11 Canada Inc. in improving their health and safety program as a focus firm was the sheer number of store locations. With more than 2,000 employees in 155 stores across B.C., they had to get information about safety to a lot of small groups of people. Enter the store safety checklist.

“We’ve appointed a store safety representative in each store and they complete a monthly safety checklist,” says Pat Smith, occupational health and safety representative for 7-11. “They record whether or not the emergency exits are clear at all times, are the fire extinguishers charged to date, is the first aid kit available and has it been properly stocked, are the washrooms clean, is the store clean and sanitary? If there are concerns, I arrange to get it taken care of. This is our major form of risk assessment.”

Paul Stephens, WCB occupational safety officer in the Burnaby/New Westminster region, is the coordinating officer for the company’s participation in the Focus Firm Strategy. He says because 7-11 is a large firm that was having a significant number of injuries, they were driving up the injury rate for their industry. “We thought we could make a difference in the industry if we made a difference with them,” he says.

Before becoming a focus firm in 1999, the company was seeing a lot of overexertion and musculoskeletal injuries (MSI) injuries. Employees were also getting hurt by tripping, running into shelves, lifting boxes of groceries or cases of soft drinks improperly, or tripping over steps or mats at the door. Of course violence and robbery were also concerns.

7-11 brought in a full-time person to focus on health and safety, and have implemented an occupational health and safety committee at their head office that includes field representatives. They are also training field reps and store managers in conducting effective accident investigations.

Stephens says the most important thing they’ve done is increase the level of awareness. “Now that they’re actually dealing with health and safety at the store level, it’s made a big change,” he says.

“Having 150 different locations has made things more challenging, because you do have to break down into a one-off each time,” says Smith.

“We’ve been trying to work on education to decrease the number of injuries from overexertion and MSI,” she adds. “We’re sending out a monthly safety bulletin to all stores. When we have new employees, our training department has changed the initial store clerk training so it includes back safety, lifting safety, robbery prevention and violence prevention.”

While 7-11 has been continuously increased staff levels by about 10 per cent each year, their injury rates are going down. For the first six months of 2001 the number of injuries are about 40 per cent below what they were for the first six months of last year.

“A few years back, there wasn’t a lot of concentration on safety,” says Althea Broaderick, assistant manager and safety rep at the West Vancouver store. “Now the company is concentrating on safety a lot more, which is good for all of us.”



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