

# Remembering Lost Lives

Work-related deaths in British Columbia in 2000



## About the WCB

Preventing on-the-job injury and disease is the first priority of the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) of British Columbia. WCB officers inspect worksites in B.C. to make sure they comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, which sets out minimum workplace standards for health and safety. The WCB also investigates serious workplace accidents and consults with employers, supervisors, and workers to promote health and safety in the workplace.

Under the requirements of the *Workers Compensation Act*, a worker must report an injury or a disabling occupational disease as soon as possible to the employer. The employer must report work-related injuries, occupational diseases, and work-related deaths to the WCB within three days. A worker may not make an agreement with the employer to give up WCB benefits.

If a worker suffers a work-related injury or illness, the WCB provides fair compensation that may include medical costs, loss of earnings, physical rehabilitation, and pensions. The WCB also works with employers to help injured workers return to work. If a worker is killed on the job, counselling and financial help are made available to the victim's family. For more information on requirements or eligibility for WCB coverage, contact the WCB office nearest you.

## WCB Prevention Information Line

The WCB Prevention Information Line can answer your questions about workplace health and safety, worker and employer responsibilities, and reporting a workplace accident or incident. The Prevention Information Line accepts anonymous calls.

Phone 604 276-3100 in the Lower Mainland, or call 1 888 621-7233 (621-SAFE) toll-free in British Columbia.

To report after-hours and weekend accidents and emergencies, call 604 273-7711 in the Lower Mainland, or call 1 866 922-4357 (WCB-HELP) toll-free in British Columbia.

## WCB publications

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# Dedication

*This report is dedicated to the memory of those who lost their lives to a work-related accident or disease.*

# Remembering lost lives creates hope for the future

How can we honour the memories of those who have lost their lives as a result of a work-related accident or disease? What can we learn from the lives that have been cut short?

In 2000, work-related accidents and diseases took the lives of 156 workers. This report reviews these deaths and looks at what is being done to prevent similar deaths in the future.

Out of a need to find some sort of meaning in the work-related losses that have occurred, communities throughout British Columbia have created worker memorials. In Vancouver, the Ironworkers Memorial Second Narrows Crossing, which spans Burrard Inlet, pays tribute to the workers who died during its construction. In Esquimalt, shipbuilders have their own memorial – a giant ship’s propeller that stands on land where the historic Yarrows Shipyard was located.

Worker memorials of all sorts are important because it is through them that we honour workers’ lives and at the same time try to understand why and how their work-related deaths occurred. In trying to answer these questions, we strive to find ways to ensure that the same thing won’t happen to someone else.

That’s why the Workers’ Compensation Board (WCB) of British Columbia – together with the B.C. Federation of Labour and the Business Council of British Columbia – is creating a provincial memorial to all B.C. workers who have died as a result of a work-related accident or disease.

The provincial memorial reminds us not only of the workers’ lives, but also of our responsibility to learn from each work-related death – so we can prevent similar deaths in the future.



**Ralph McGinn**  
President and CEO  
Workers’ Compensation Board  
of British Columbia



**Roberta Ellis**  
Vice president, Prevention Division  
Workers’ Compensation Board  
of British Columbia



# The provincial worker memorial

*“It’s about remembrance and hope.”*



# New memorial honours workers

Worker memorials in communities around B.C. honour workers lost to a work-related accident or disease – and remind the living that we must never stop striving for healthier, safer workplaces.

It's in this spirit that the WCB – together with the B.C. Federation of Labour and the Business Council of British Columbia – has created a provincial memorial in remembrance of all B.C. workers who have died as a result of a work-related accident or disease. This memorial, dedicated during the April 2001 Day of Mourning, is in the Sanctuary at Vancouver's Hastings Park.

Each year on the Day of Mourning, the WCB joins families, workers, employers, unions, and the general public in ceremonies around B.C. that commemorate those workers who have died or been seriously injured on the job.

Together with the provincial memorial, 40 communities around B.C. are also participating in the Regional Workers' Memorial Program, developing their own community memorials to workers lost to a work-related accident or disease.

*“The provincial memorial is about remembrance and hope. The forget-me-not flowers on the memorial are a symbol that says B.C. workers must not, and will not, be forgotten. In remembering these workers, we keep alive the belief that by working together we can prevent similar work-related deaths from happening.”*

*– Ralph McGinn, president and CEO, WCB*



# Community memorials take many forms

*Many B.C. communities have erected worker memorials in remembrance of workers who have lost their lives to a work-related accident or disease. These memorials are as unique as the workers they honour.*

## Vancouver: Ironworkers' memorial

When ironworker Bill Stroud fell 30 m (100 ft.) into the waters of the Burrard Inlet and broke his back in two places, he was one of the lucky ones. On that day, June 17, 1958, several spans of the Second Narrows Bridge collapsed. As a result 19 workers lost their lives. The accident



occurred when an overloaded temporary supporting beam gave way, hurling about 50 workers into the water.

“I thought I was going to drown,” Stroud says, “because my tool belt was heavy and the water was so black I didn’t know which way to go.” He clung to floating scaffold planks for two hours, waiting his turn for rescue.

Each year on June 17, members of the Ironworkers Union Local 97 and others honour those who died in the construction of the bridge

by laying wreaths at the workers’ memorial near the bridge. The bridge itself became a workers’ memorial in 1994 when it was renamed the Ironworkers Memorial Second Narrows Crossing.

## Esquimalt: Shipbuilders’ memorial

A massive ship’s propeller pulled from the sea now stands on dry land in Esquimalt as a monument to the history of shipbuilding in B.C. and to those workers who died or were disabled or injured during the course of that history.

The Esquimalt Shipyard Memorial Park is located on land formerly owned by the Yarrows Shipyard. The Municipality of Esquimalt and the Yarrows Employees Association, a loose-knit group of former employees, had been looking for a fitting tribute when the Department of National Defence (DND) discovered the giant propeller in the mud below the Yarrows slipway.

The DND cleaned up the propeller, believed to be from a World War II Liberty ship, and donated it for the shipbuilders’ memorial, which was unveiled during the Day of Mourning ceremonies on April 28, 1999.



# Work-related deaths in British Columbia, 2000



# A review of work-related deaths in 2000

As long as workers continue to die or be injured as a result of work-related accidents and diseases, the WCB will continue to champion the importance of health and safety in the workplace. Only through the combined prevention efforts of employers and workers, working together with the WCB, can we reduce injuries and disease – and save lives.

This section provides a statistical overview of work-related deaths in B.C. for 2000. Each death – 152 men and 4 women in 2000 – reminds us of the loss to their families, co-workers, and communities. Each death also reminds us all of our shared commitment to prevent similar work-related deaths.

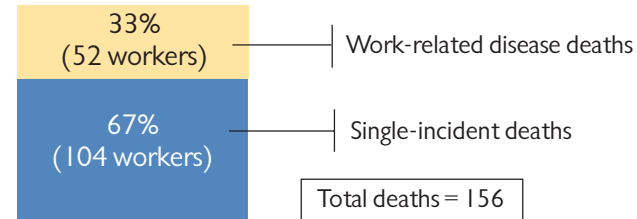
*“No one ever made me feel that he was just another statistic to the WCB. He was always referred to as Rob, which was so comforting for me. We do need to compile data and fill out forms, but the most important part is to recognize that this was a loss of a wonderful person.”*

– Sharon Brew, partner of deceased worker Rob Anker

**Single-incident deaths** are work-related fatalities that occur when workers receive injuries or are exposed to large amounts of hazardous substances; in these cases workers die either immediately or soon afterwards.

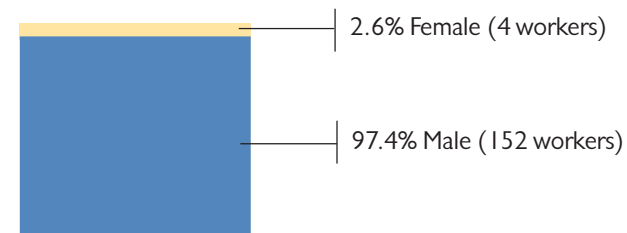
**Work-related disease deaths** are work-related fatalities that occur when workers contract a disease as a result of long-term exposure to a hazardous substance or contact with a disease-causing agent; in these cases workers die after a period of time has passed.

## Single-incident and work-related disease deaths in B.C., 2000



Single-incident deaths accounted for 67% of the 156 work-related deaths that occurred in B.C. in 2000.

## Percentage of male and female workers who died as a result of work-related accidents and diseases in B.C., 2000



Over 97% of workers who died were male. The disproportionate number of male deaths reflects the fact that higher-risk industries such as transportation, construction, and forestry still employ mostly male workers.

# *After the accident: The family is notified*

*In September 1999, a 51-year-old supervisor named Rob Anker died in a logging accident. As with most fatal workplace accidents, Rob's death set off a chain of events that affected many people – his family and friends, co-workers, trauma-services providers, WCB safety officers, and the other WCB workers who deal with work-related deaths.*

*The “After the Accident” stories that appear throughout this report trace the key events that followed Rob's death. These same events are being played out in communities across B.C. as a result of many of the work-related deaths that occurred in 2000. The story of Rob Anker's death is in many ways the story of every worker who has died in a workplace accident.*

## Companion looks for hope

When an RCMP officer showed up at Sharon Brew's door, she knew she wasn't going to like what he had to say. Heart racing, she told him, “I don't want to talk to you,” and closed the door before he could give her the news.

When she opened the door again, the officer told her what she had already guessed – Sharon's partner, Rob Anker, had died in an accident at the logging operation where he worked as a supervisor. A parked skidder (a rubber-tired piece of mobile equipment used for pulling logs) had slid off a skid trail and struck Rob as he was hooking up logs on the slope below. Rob died that day, September 17, 1999, at the age of 51.

“In that split second when there's a knock on your door, your whole world changes,” says Sharon. “The hard part is you don't even get a chance to say goodbye.”

Sharon had met Rob five years earlier at a dance in Vernon and quickly found they had much in common. They shared a passion for golfing and both had kids from previous marriages. Both Sharon and Rob were divorced and had been single for over a decade.

“Our meeting was a wonderful thing for both of us,” Sharon says, “because you sort of give up at that point in your life and think, I guess I'll be by myself. It's so wonderful to meet somebody that fits in not only to your life and your heart but also with your whole family. My kids adored him. They said they can't remember him not being in their life – and it was only five years. Sometimes it's not how long you know someone, it's the impact they make.”

Sharon's kids, Stacey, Shelley, and Rob, were 29, 25, and 22 at the time of Anker's death. Anker's daughter, Jody, and son, Chad, were both in their 20s when their dad died.

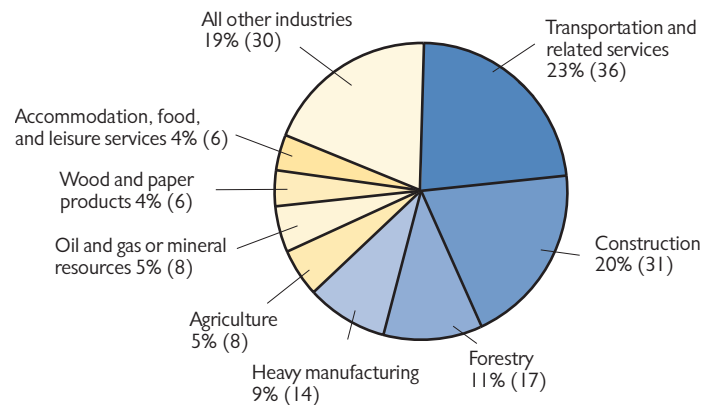
“Somewhere down the road this will have some sort of meaning that maybe I'll understand. Sometimes that's the best you can aim for in your life – just trust that, for some strange reason, this had a purpose. You've got to find some positives. In the worst storm there's got to be something good, and that's called hope.”



## Deaths touch every industry

When it comes to workplace injury and disease prevention, the WCB works with employers and workers across all industries because there is no such thing as a risk-free industry. Work-related deaths touch every industry in B.C.

### Number of work-related deaths by industry in B.C., 2000



Total number of death claims accepted in 2000 = 156

Nearly one-quarter of all work-related deaths (36 workers) in B.C. in 2000 occurred in the transportation and related services industries. Eighteen truck drivers died in motor vehicle accidents, accounting for half of these deaths.

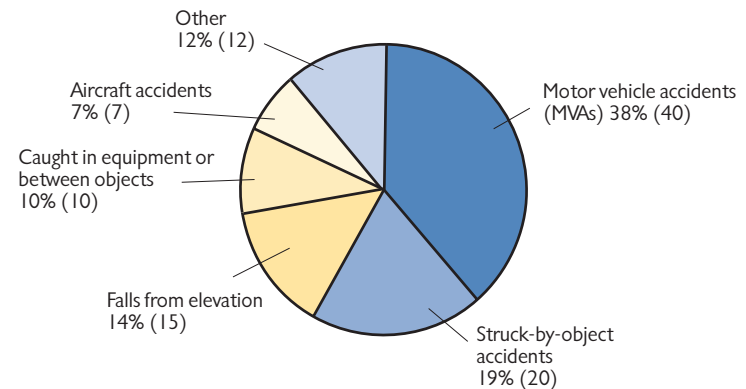
The construction and forestry industries combined accounted for nearly one-third (48) of all work-related deaths. These two industries traditionally have had higher death rates than most, which is why the WCB directs so much of its prevention efforts to construction and forestry.

## Single-incident deaths

Workplace accidents claimed the lives of 104 workers in B.C. in 2000. Any number of accidents causing death is too many because almost all single-incident deaths are preventable. For this reason, the WCB continues to focus much of its prevention efforts on educating employers and workers about how they can identify and eliminate workplace hazards.

This section reviews single-incident deaths that occurred in B.C. workplaces in 2000. These deaths are divided into accident categories, as shown in the accompanying graph. The next page gives definitions for each accident category along with examples of the types of accidents that occurred in 2000.

### Single-incident deaths in B.C., 2000



Total number of single-incident death claims accepted in 2000 = 104

Forty workers died in motor vehicle accidents (MVAs), accounting for 38% of all single-incident deaths in B.C.

## Definitions of accident types

**Motor vehicle accidents (MVAs)** are accidents involving one or more licensed vehicles and often involving pedestrians as well. Workers may be driving their own cars or trucks, or they may be driving company vehicles such as cars, pickup trucks, delivery vans, or logging trucks.

**A truck driver died when his truck ran off the road.**

**A supervisor died when his vehicle collided with a logging truck.**

**A farm worker died in a head-on collision.**

**Struck-by-object accidents** are accidents in which a worker is struck by a moving object such as a falling tree, a rolling log, an unstable load that shifts, a piece of machinery that flies off, or an improperly parked vehicle that rolls.

**A hooktender was struck by a rolling log that dislodged from a choker.**

**A welder was crushed by a falling metal fish ladder that was under repair.**

**A worker was repairing a truck transmission when the vehicle rolled and crushed him.**

**Falls from elevation** are accidents in which a worker falls from a height and lands on a surface below the one on which the worker stood before the fall. Workers fall from roof edges, through holes in roofs or floors, while walking along open beams, or from ladders or sets of stairs.

**A window cleaner fell 23 storeys.**

**An electrician died when a stack of drywall tipped over and knocked him off an unguarded mezzanine to the floor 3 m (10 ft.) below.**

**A carpenter died after falling 5 m (18 ft.) through a hole in a scaffold.**

**Caught in equipment or between objects** are accidents in which a worker is caught and crushed in a piece of equipment or between two objects such as a load of pulp and a steel wall.

**A forklift operator in the wholesale industry was caught between a forklift and two pallets of tile.**

**A truck driver was crushed between a mobile crane and a flat-deck truck.**

**The owner of a recycling plant was crushed in a metal compact baler.**

**Aircraft accidents** are accidents in which an airplane, a helicopter, or other aircraft crashes because of mechanical failure, bad weather, poor visibility, or some other cause. Workers may be piloting aircraft for heli-logging operations, heli-skiing or sportfishing operations, in the charter air service industry, or while flying workers in and out of remote worksites.

**A camera assistant died in a helicopter crash.**

**A heli-pilot instructor was training a student in a helicopter when it crashed.**

**An instructor's hang glider blew into power lines and fell to the ground.**

**Other accidents** include industrial vehicle accidents, drowning, accidents involving electrical contact, boat accidents, and acts of violence or force.

**A longshoreman was struck by a forklift.**

**A fisherman drowned when he tried to assist a co-worker who had fallen into the water.**

**A crane operator was electrocuted when his crane rigging contacted a power line.**



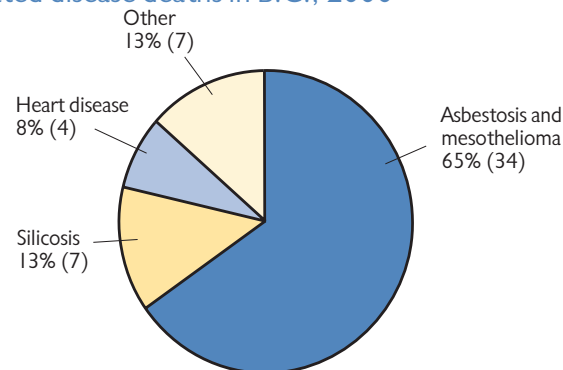
## Work-related disease deaths

Work-related diseases present different challenges than workplace accidents do – it may take years of exposure to hazardous substances before workers are aware they have a health problem.

The WCB has officers who are specially trained to identify hazardous substances that can cause disease. These WCB officers educate employers and workers about safe work practices that will reduce or eliminate their exposure to such substances.

This section reviews work-related disease deaths that occurred in B.C. in 2000. These deaths are divided into disease categories, as shown in the accompanying graph. This section also includes definitions for each disease category and examples of the types of diseases that 52 workers died of in 2000.

### Work-related disease deaths in B.C., 2000



Total number of work-related disease death claims accepted in 2000 = 52

Thirty-four workers died of asbestosis and mesothelioma (diseases caused by exposure to asbestos fibres), accounting for 65% of all work-related disease deaths in B.C. in 2000. (Note: Percentages in this graph do not add up to 100% because of rounding.)

### Definitions of disease types

**Asbestosis and mesothelioma** are asbestos-related diseases. Asbestosis causes scarring and stiffening of the lungs, making breathing difficult. It can lead to fatal complications such as pneumonia. Mesothelioma is a rare cancer of the linings of the lungs and abdomen that always leads to death. Most mesothelioma cases are linked to asbestos exposure. These diseases usually develop decades after the worker was exposed to asbestos fibres.

**A shipbuilder exposed to asbestos died of asbestosis.**

**A sheet-metal worker exposed to asbestos dust and fibres died of asbestosis.**

**A pipefitter exposed to asbestos died of mesothelioma.**

**Silicosis** is a chronic lung disease that, like asbestosis, causes scarring and stiffening of the lungs, making breathing difficult. Silicosis can lead to heart failure and death. Workers who develop silicosis have typically been exposed to silica dust in mining operations or other work in which rock is being drilled, crushed, or moved. The most common type of crystalline silica is quartz, a basic component of sand and most rocks.

**A miner died of silicosis.**

**A mill repairman died of silicosis.**

**An air track operator died of silicosis.**

**Heart disease** includes heart-related conditions such as heart attacks that can result from long-term exposure to smoke and chemicals.

**Other diseases** include cancers such as lung and bladder cancer, as well as infectious diseases such as hepatitis B and C, hantavirus, and tuberculosis.

**A smelterman exposed to toxic substances at work died of bladder cancer.**

**An engineer exposed to benzene in a laboratory died of leukemia.**

**A special-effects worker suffered an allergy-induced asthma attack and died.**

# *After the accident: WCB steps in to help the family*

## **Sensitive Claims section helps families in tough times**

Sharon Brew credits the “gentle persuasion” of WCB case manager Bill Blackler with helping her through a tough time following the death of her partner, Rob Anker.

Brew says, “I had dealt with tragedy in my life and I thought that I didn’t need any help. But on this one I did. This one really rocked my boat.”

Anker’s case is one of the many work-related deaths that Blackler has handled in the Sensitive Claims section, where he has worked for 10 years helping bereaved family members and terminally ill workers. Blackler deals in some way with every one of B.C.’s work-related deaths, of which there were 156 in 2000.

Blackler works closely with families, dealing with issues both emotional and financial. He refers family members for grief counselling, if necessary, and explains the benefits and resources available to them.

For example, Blackler explains that the WCB always pays for funeral expenses and, if necessary, transportation of the body. If the worker is survived by a spouse (or partner) or other dependants, Blackler will arrange for an emergency lump sum to sustain the family until pension benefits begin. In the longer term, the spouse may also be eligible for vocational counselling and educational upgrading or on-the-job training.

Blackler says, “We’re helping people in one of the most desperate times of their life. We’re trying to make a really bad situation a little bit better. We try to make a difference.”

### **Care and support ease terminal illnesses**

WCB Sensitive Claims staff work closely with terminally ill workers and their families to ensure they receive appropriate care and support in their time of need.

A case manager or rehabilitation consultant can explain WCB benefits to the worker as well as arrange for in-home nursing care, assistance with yard work or home maintenance, and compensation if a working spouse has to stay home to care for the ill worker.

Sensitive Claims also provides referrals for separation and loss counselling.

*“I had dealt with tragedy in my life and I thought that I didn’t need any help. But on this one I did. This one really rocked my boat.”*

*— Sharon Brew*

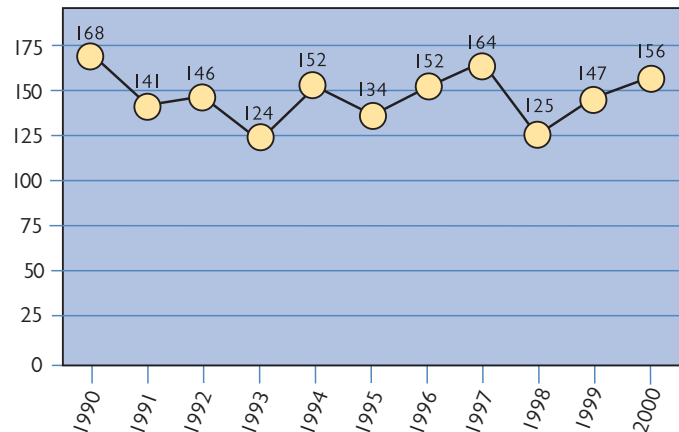
# How 2000 statistics relate to previous years

This section explains how the 2000 statistics on work-related deaths in B.C. compare to statistics from recent years. It examines trends in the number of deaths in B.C. workplaces, death rates, and the proportion of single-incident deaths to work-related disease deaths.

## Number of deaths tells only part of story

Awareness of health and safety in B.C. workplaces has led to better training, safer work practices, and improvements in equipment and facilities, yet the total number of work-related deaths per year has changed little over the past 11 years. However, the *number of deaths* tells only part of the story.

Total number of death claims accepted, 1990–2000

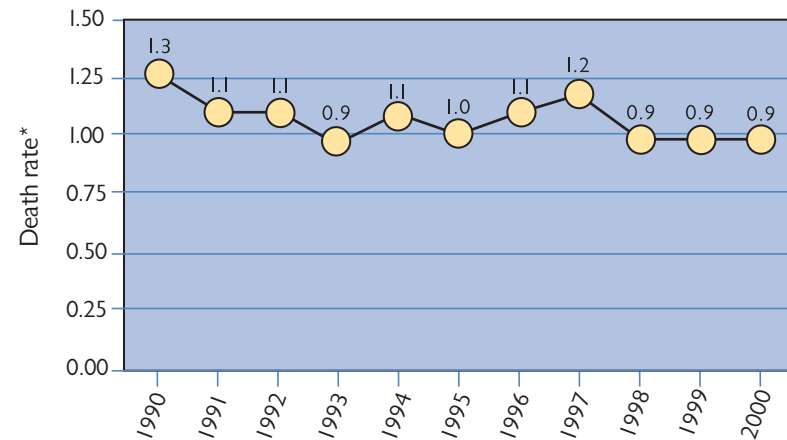


The number of work-related death claims accepted by the WCB each year has fluctuated slightly in the 11 years from 1990 to 2000.

## Death rates have dropped

To get a more accurate idea of how safe B.C. workplaces are, one must look at *death rates*, which reflect the number of work-related deaths in relation to the number of workers employed during that year. The graph below shows how the death rate has declined slightly from 1990 to 2000.

Death rate, 1990–2000



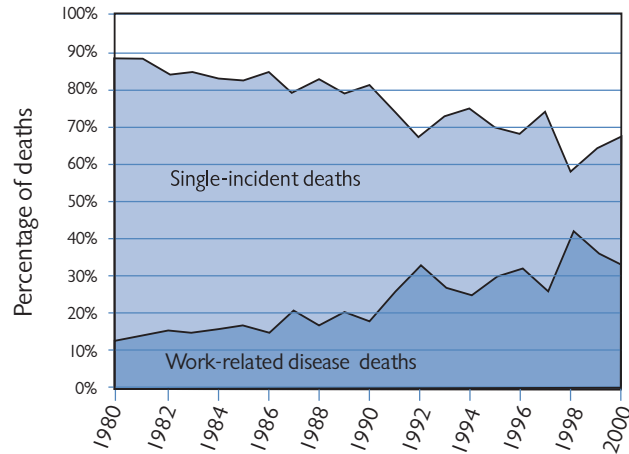
\*per 10,000 person-years of employment

Death rates in B.C. workplaces have fallen during the 11 years from 1990 to 2000. Each number in this graph indicates the number of deaths that occurred for every 10,000 person-years of employment. For example, the death rate of 0.9 in 2000 means that for every 10,000 people working full-time during that year, 0.9 people died from a work-related accident or disease.

## Work-related disease deaths are rising

While single-incident deaths have decreased, the main reason the *overall* number of work-related deaths in B.C. each year has not changed is that work-related disease deaths have been increasing over the past two decades.

Proportion of single-incident deaths to work-related disease deaths in B.C., 1980–2000



The proportion of work-related deaths has changed over the past 21 years, with single-incident deaths decreasing and work-related disease deaths increasing. The increase in work-related disease deaths explains why the overall number of deaths each year has stayed about the same despite health and safety improvements that have reduced accidents in B.C. workplaces.

## Past exposures caused today's work-related disease deaths

A largely under-reported fact about work-related disease deaths in B.C. — which were responsible for one-third of all work-related deaths in 2000 — is that in most cases they are the result of hazardous-substance exposures that happened decades ago.

Asbestosis, a lung disease caused by exposure to asbestos fibres, usually takes 15 years or more to develop. Mesothelioma, an asbestos-related cancer of the lining of the lungs and abdomen, also takes years to develop, as does silicosis, a lung disease caused by exposure to silica dust.

Workers who develop asbestosis or mesothelioma have usually been exposed to asbestos fibres during processes such as installing, removing, or simply working around asbestos insulation or other asbestos-containing materials. Workers who develop silicosis have usually been exposed to silica dust in mining operations or other work in which rock is being drilled, crushed, or moved.

Although this province has made tremendous improvements in eliminating or minimizing worker exposures to hazardous substances, many of today's disease deaths have their roots in the past. They are a direct result of asbestos and silica exposure in the 1960s and '70s. Since then, workplace controls and protective equipment have improved and, if properly used, greatly reduce the threat from these substances.

# *After the accident: WCB investigates the accident, promotes safety*

## For WCB officers, it's about saving lives

Dealing with work-related deaths is the toughest thing that WCB officers do, says WCB regional manager Bob Schultz. That's why officers work so hard to learn from accident investigations and recommend changes that will make workplaces safer. It's all about saving lives.

Schultz understands why officers can be hard-nosed when it comes to enforcing the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation because he's seen numerous single-incident deaths during his 13 years as a safety officer and 7 years as regional manager of the Vernon–Kamloops–Williams Lake region.

Schultz says, “When attending a scene, WCB officers always keep in the forefront the fact that workers may be traumatized. The officer goes in with a focus, but also with compassion for the people who are affected by the death.”

An officer's first responsibility when attending an accident scene is to make sure no one else is in any further danger. The officer's second responsibility is to secure the scene so an accident investigation can be conducted and information about the causes of the accident can be collected in an accident report.

“As tragic as deaths such as Rob Anker's are, we have to get as much information as possible from them to improve prevention in the industry and across the province,” says Schultz. “Accident investigations provide the WCB and employers with important information that points toward ways in which we can better educate employers and workers about health and safety in the workplace.”

Once the causes of the Rob Anker accident had been identified, WCB safety officers could convey this information to logging industry employers and explain what employers and workers can do to help prevent it from happening in their workplace.

Officers stress the importance of checking the stability of machinery, maintaining mechanical components such as brakes, and remaining aware of the positioning of workers below machinery. Armed with this knowledge, employers are then able to meet with their workers and heighten awareness of specific health and safety issues.

“I want it to become unacceptable for *anybody* to operate in a careless and dangerous manner on the job,” says Schultz. “Everybody on a worksite should have the knowledge to do what they're doing properly – doing it properly means doing it safely.”

# Working together to prevent work-related deaths

*“The fundamental, driving force behind all the efforts of the WCB Prevention Division is saving lives. We continually return to the underlying idea that work-related injuries and deaths are preventable because it’s such an important theme. It’s quite literally a matter of life and death.”*

*— Roberta Ellis, vice president,  
WCB Prevention Division*

Work-related deaths are preventable, but improving workplace health and safety is an undertaking that requires the combined efforts of the WCB, employers, supervisors, and workers. If we all work together, we can have workplaces free of hazards that can cause injury or disease.

## What the WCB does

WCB prevention efforts include several key strategies – workplace inspections, accident investigations and reports, research, and standards review, as well as publications and videos promoting safe work practices.

### Workplace inspections

WCB officers inspect workplaces around B.C., identifying hazards that can cause injuries, diseases, or deaths and finding ways to improve or eliminate hazardous conditions. If company owners, employers, or workers are not following requirements specified in the *Workers Compensation Act* and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, WCB officers will take enforcement measures.

Officers may write orders or warning letters that tell the employer to change a work procedure or modify equipment (for example, to safeguard unguarded machinery). If an owner or employer continues to operate in a way that endangers workers, an officer may close the employer’s operation, impose a penalty, or initiate prosecution.

### Accident investigations and reports

A key part of the WCB’s prevention efforts involves investigating accidents and using the information gleaned from investigations to help prevent similar accidents from happening again.

WCB officers thoroughly investigate all workplace accidents involving deaths and critical injuries. During investigations, officers may take enforcement action including the issuance of orders, warning letters, sanctions, or observation reports.

Investigations culminate in an accident investigation report produced by the WCB or the employer. Accident investigation reports are important because they examine the causes of the accident and recommend ways in which similar accidents can be prevented.



Accident investigation reports may lead the WCB to:

- Produce and distribute prevention information (safety bulletins, hazard alerts, or industry notices) informing employers and industry associations of recent accidents and their causes
- Hold information sessions with employers and workers in the affected industry to notify them of the accident and discuss prevention methods
- Notify other workers' compensation boards and share information with them
- Provide information for coroners' inquests and prosecutions
- Recommend changes or modifications to the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation or existing safety standards
- Work with manufacturers to improve or modify product design
- Direct or order employers or suppliers to make product modifications and/or stop activities until they take corrective measures

## Research

Research is a valuable tool that can help prevent workplace injuries, diseases, and deaths. WCB focus reports, for example, are thorough statistical reviews that examine specific industries and occupations to identify current health and safety issues. Analyzing statistics and identifying hazard trends helps direct prevention efforts to areas where they are needed most.

Focus reports provide employers, supervisors, workers, and health and safety personnel with information about work-related accidents and diseases and how they can be prevented. Recent focus reports have looked at industries as diverse as forest-products manufacturing, health care, heavy manufacturing, and hotels and restaurants.

## Research seeks causes behind young-worker accidents

Young workers face an increased challenge when it comes to workplace health and safety because they often lack the skills or experience necessary to recognize workplace hazards or to ask for training if it has not been provided. Six B.C. workers aged 24 or under died in work-related accidents in 2000.

Although the needs of new and less experienced workers are addressed in WCB initiatives and publications, the WCB is looking for other common factors in young worker accidents. The WCB is conducting a joint study with ICBC to try to determine what other factors may be contributing to injuries and death while young people are at work or behind the wheel.

The study, which compares young people who have had accidents to those who haven't, examines characteristics such as risk-taking behaviour, self-esteem, susceptibility to peer pressure, education, as well as tobacco, alcohol, and drug use. Identifying possible risk factors such as these in young workers may help the WCB to prevent work-related injuries and deaths by focusing prevention efforts more effectively.

## Standards review

The WCB reviews national and international standards on an ongoing basis, and has regular and voting members on various health and safety standing committees that are part of recognized standard associations such as the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

## Publications and videos promoting safe work practices

Accident investigations and research projects provide the WCB with valuable information that can be used to educate employers and workers about workplace health and safety. The WCB conveys information to employers and workers by distributing publications and videos promoting safe work practices.

Surveys have indicated that those who receive print materials describing safe work practices usually take immediate steps to improve workplace health and safety.

*Lockout* is an example of such a publication. Lockout (using locks on control devices to render machinery or equipment inoperable or to isolate an energy source) is a crucial step when workers are performing maintenance on machinery or equipment. Failure to lock out machinery or equipment is a major cause of many work-related deaths that fall into categories such as “struck-by-object” or “caught in between equipment or between objects.”

The *Lockout* manual stresses the importance of lockout, clarifies employer and worker responsibilities, and explains how to go about locking out machinery and equipment in a variety of situations.



## Studies aim to prevent work-related diseases

The WCB is committed to identifying hazardous substances in today’s workplaces and taking steps to ensure that workers remain healthy and safe at work. As part of its efforts to prevent workplace disease, the WCB funds research that identifies hazards that cause disease as well as ways to eliminate or minimize them.

For example, radiology workers who process radiographic film may be exposed to chemicals known to cause asthma and other respiratory ailments. A WCB-funded study conducted at the University of British Columbia evaluated the effectiveness of several ventilation methods for eliminating or minimizing worker exposures to these hazardous chemicals. The study results will help radiographic facilities protect their staff from possible exposures.

Another WCB-funded study is examining the use of theatrical fogs and smokes in the arts and entertainment industries. The full effect of such fogs and smokes on cast and crew members is not yet known. By measuring worker exposures, analyzing the chemicals present, and assessing the symptoms of exposed workers, UBC researchers will be able to make recommendations about what should be done to ensure that workers remain healthy and safe while working with or around fogs and smokes.

## What employers can do

Employers can help ensure an effective health and safety program by taking the lead and making it clear to supervisors and workers that health and safety are important in their workplace.

Employers can do the following things to help improve health and safety at work:

- Develop and implement an effective health and safety program.
- Develop written safe work procedures and emergency response procedures.
- Ensure that workers receive adequate training, instruction, and supervision.
- Ensure that workers are provided with and use any required personal protective equipment.
- Provide appropriate first aid services, equipment, and supplies.
- Support the work of the workplace health and safety committee or worker health and safety representative, where one is required.
- Hold regular health and safety meetings.
- Maintain records and statistics.
- Ensure that regular work site inspections occur.
- Report serious accidents to the WCB immediately.
- Ensure that accident investigations are conducted.

## What supervisors can do

Supervisors can do the following things to help improve health and safety at work:

- Ensure that workers are trained and aware of all workplace hazards.
- Provide workers with specific job instructions and ensure that they follow those instructions.
- Hold regular crew talks to discuss safety issues with workers.
- Conduct formal safety inspections (it may be helpful to have a worker health and safety representative present during such inspections).
- Conduct informal daily inspections to ensure that workers are following safe work procedures.
- Ensure that workers have access to, are instructed in the use of, and use required personal protective equipment.
- Support the efforts of a workplace health and safety committee.
- Conduct accident investigations.

*“Rob said, ‘You cannot afford to be unsafe in the bush. If you’re tired, you take a break, because you have got to be on the ball out there. You can’t just think of yourself. Everything you do affects somebody down the line.’”*

*— Sharon Brew, who lost her partner, logging supervisor Rob Anker, in a logging accident*

## What workers can do

Workers can do the following things to help improve health and safety at work:

- Understand their training and follow safe work practices and procedures.
- Notify supervisors or their employer of new hazards or other problems.
- Participate in a workplace health and safety committee, or support its efforts.
- Use required personal protective equipment.
- Support their employer's occupational health and safety program.
- Follow safe work practices so they do not endanger the health and safety of themselves or their co-workers.

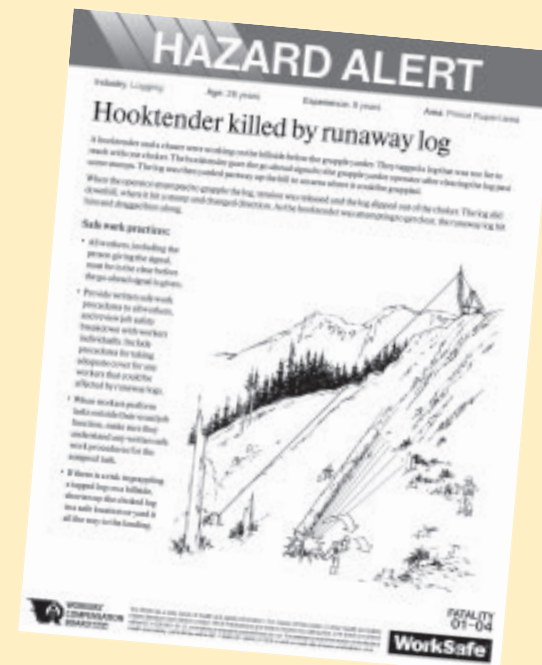
To find out more about WCB prevention and what you can do to improve health and safety in your workplace, visit the WCB Web site at [www.worksafebc.com](http://www.worksafebc.com).

The WCB magazine *WorkSafe* provides occupational health and safety news for B.C. employers and workers. You can view the magazine on the WCB Web site. For your free print subscription, call 604 231-8690 in the Lower Mainland or toll-free 1 800 661-2112, local 8690.

## Hazard alerts help improve workplace health and safety

Hazard alerts are one of the tools that the WCB uses to raise awareness of specific health and safety issues among employers and workers. A hazard alert is a prevention poster that focuses on an actual workplace accident. Hazard alerts provide health and safety tips that employers and workers can use to help ensure that the accident described will not occur in their workplace.

The WCB mails out about 60,000–100,000 copies of hazard alerts every year. They are sent to selected industries to warn employers about potential hazards in the workplace.



# After the accident: WCB provides support to co-workers

## Critical incident response program assists workers

In the midst of the emotional chaos that can follow a traumatic workplace accident such as Rob Anker's death, co-workers are often surprised and relieved to find a resource that helps them cope with their feelings: the critical incident response (CIR) program.

As soon as CIR program coordinator Dawna Huff received notification that there had been a work-related death at the logging operation where Anker worked as a supervisor, she contacted a trauma-services provider to arrange an intervention (or debriefing) for the traumatized co-workers.

Whenever Huff receives notification of a traumatic accident, she looks to a pool of about 145 providers across B.C. for someone who understands the industry and is based within the community where the accident has occurred.

"The arrangements all occur the same day we're notified, and everybody involved is updated the same day," says Huff. "Ideally, an intervention occurs within 24 to 72 hours after the accident. The sooner we get traumatized workers into an intervention, the better."

Huff stresses that the intervention is always confidential and voluntary – workers can choose not to take part in it.

Huff also stresses that CIR intervention should not be confused with counselling or therapy. Interventions focus solely on stabilizing workers by responding to their initial trauma reactions. If a worker needs it, the WCB also offers up to five hours of individual follow-up with the provider.

The theory behind CIR intervention is that immediately assisting workers with their trauma reactions can have a positive impact on their recovery and help them get on with their lives. It can also prevent further accidents – traumatized workers are more likely to injure themselves at work – by providing workers with the tools they need to deal with their feelings.

The CIR program, the first trauma-response program offered by a compensation system in North America, is a three-year pilot project that is evaluating the effectiveness of this type of intervention.

"The feedback we've received from workers who have been involved with the program is, for the most part, very supportive and positive," says Huff.

*"Last August we experienced a workplace fatality. Employees were extremely upset, especially those who were first on the scene. By discussing and confronting their feelings at the debriefing, employees began to cope with their trauma. In fact, many didn't realize how deeply they were affected until they attended the debriefing."*

*– Karen Kerr, health and safety administrator,  
Western Stevedoring*

*B.C. workers who died as a result of a work-related accident or disease will always be remembered.*



# WCB offices

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## Head Office / Richmond

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1 888 621-7233 (621-SAFE)

**Administration:**  
6951 Westminster Highway  
Phone 604 273-2266  
1 800 661-2112

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## After Hours

**Health & Safety Emergency**  
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Visit our Web site at [www.worksafefbc.com](http://www.worksafefbc.com)