

the JOURNEY

FOR WORKERS WITH SEVERE INJURIES

WORK SAFE BC
WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

pathways

Helicopter burn victim setting lofty goals

Phil O'Driscoll was flying high. At 33, he had a job he loved and a fiancée he loved even more who was just months away from giving birth to his first child. But on August 2, 2005, Phil's world came crashing down. Literally. That day, the engine on his helicopter failed and exploded when Phil crashed into the mountainside, turning him into a human ball of fire.

Phil had made a split-second decision that day. He could have landed the helicopter on steep, rocky terrain, but the helicopter would have crushed his friend, Emery, waiting directly below for Phil to fly him back to the mining camp. Instead, Phil flew into the face of danger — spinning uncontrollably off the side of the mountain — saving Emery's life, but nearly taking his own.

Four months later, Phil woke up in the hospital, unrecognizable to



Phil O'Driscoll, who suffered severe burns in 2005, recently upgraded his flying credentials at Langley's Heli-College Canada.

himself and others. And that's when, as he recalls, the real pain began. "I can't describe how excruciating it is to recover from burns," he says. "You just want to scream, and you beg and pray that you'll just pass out."

Since then, Phil has sustained 50-plus surgeries — 39 in the first 15 months following his injury. He endured numerous skin grafts and a complete reconstruction of his face, including a new nose fashioned from one of his fingers. His hands, mostly immobile, are stuck in a claw-like position, despite several surgeries to correct them.

"I could go on without looks, but my life had always been about my hands. I'd been driving trucks and

bulldozers, flying helicopters and planes, and wrestling cattle and crocodiles," says the Australian citizen, who was working in Terrace at the time of his injury and has since returned home.

Facing a life without meaningful work, Phil spiraled into a sea of depression. "I've since learned that depression is debilitating. You just lose yourself."

While Phil's losses are unimaginable to most, he hasn't lost his sense of purpose. "Doing something meaningful is one of the most important aspects of recovery. People need a reason to get up in the morning," says Jane Doogan, Phil's WorkSafeBC case manager.

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"Phil wanted to be a father to his daughter and get back to work, and his resolve has been nothing short of amazing."

Between surgeries, Phil worked toward his goal of flying again. In late 2007, a previous employer called asking for Phil's help. "I started thinking that I could have a life again, in spite of this burned and mangled body."

Phil underwent rigorous testing to regain his pilot's licence and receive medical clearance to fly in Canada and Australia. "What used to take me five minutes, now takes 45. But I can still do it, and there's no way I consider myself disabled."

Nowadays, Phil still has his ups and downs, but knows what he needs to move forward. "If I can focus on my daughter and my work, it'll all be good." ■■



"Phil wanted to be a father to his daughter and get back to work, and his resolve has been nothing short of amazing," says Jane Doogan, Phil's WorkSafeBC case manager.

We'd love to hear from you

If you have suggestions for future articles, or would like to tell your story to our readers, please call Special Care Services at 604 231-8888, toll-free at 1 888 967-5377, or send an e-mail to contactscs@worksafebc.com.

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WORK SAFE BC

WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Help is just a phone call away

Living with the consequences of a serious injury is difficult. And it can be difficult in unexpected ways. Anger, frustration, anxiety, and depression can affect not just the person who's been injured, but his or her family as well. Luckily, caring people are available to help.

If you or your family members are in distress as a result of your injury, please call us. We may be able to provide additional services, or connect you with other social services that can help you.

In January 2010, we'll be expanding our services to include a crisis line. It will be staffed by professional counsellors, who will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They can provide support to you and your family, refer you to other services in your community, and alert us so we can follow up with

you. If you're in crisis — psychological or emotional — call 1 800 624-2928. If you need urgent medical attention, call 911 or go to your nearest hospital.

For more information about the crisis line, visit WorkSafeBC.com in the new year, and watch for more details in the next issue of **the Journey**. ■■



We'd like to meet with you

Do you have concerns about your health or medical equipment? Perhaps you've had the same prosthesis for 15 years, or have been housebound during the winter. If so, we'd like to help in whatever way we can.

Starting in January 2010, a team of WorkSafeBC nurses and social workers will be meeting with workers like you who have been severely injured. Someone from the team will contact you in the new year to set up a meeting at your home or a nearby WorkSafeBC office — whichever is more convenient for you. The team will

want to hear how you're doing, respond to any of your concerns, and check to make sure you're receiving the benefits and allowances you're entitled to receive.

If you have any questions about this process, or would like to share any other concerns, contact your case manager, or call Special Care Services at 604 231-8888, toll-free at 1 888 967-5377. ■■



Send us your questions

If you have questions about your benefits, pension, or other services you're entitled to receive, there's a chance that other readers are wondering about the same things. Drop us a line at contactscs@worksafebc.com, or call Special Care Services, 604 231-8888, toll-free at 1 888 967-5377. We'll answer your questions promptly, and will also publish a sample of all the questions we've received (along with our answers) in future issues of the Journey.

Discovering the power in me

Seminar offers glimpse into more hopeful future



When someone is suddenly disabled, life takes a 180-degree turn. Former expectations must be set aside, and there's often no road map for the future. WorkSafeBC's Special Care Services, in partnership with The Pacific Institute, will be hosting a seminar designed to help people with disabilities develop the necessary tools to cultivate inner strength

and resiliency so they can regain control over their lives. *Discovering the power in me* focuses on the power of the mind. The seminar will be held March 24–25, in Richmond, B.C. To find out more, please e-mail contactscs@worksafebc.com or call Special Care Services at 604 231-8888, toll-free at 1 888 967-5377. ■■



The Special Care Services team assists severely injured workers with their claims and helps them access the services and benefits that they're entitled to receive.

Special care team at your service

If you've had a serious injury, you may already be familiar with WorkSafeBC's Special Care Services. WorkSafeBC established this team in 2001 to provide case management services to workers who have suffered significant and permanent loss of function as a result of their injuries.

In its early years, the department had a team of eight staff. Then, in 2009, the department expanded its team in order to provide the best possible service to you. To this day, Special Care Services continues to grow in order to better meet your needs.

Jennifer Leyen, who leads Special Care Services, says her team feels privileged to be able to help injured workers. "The people we serve have suffered tremendous injuries — spinal cord injuries, brain injuries, burns, and amputations," she says. "We're inspired every day by their stories — as devastating as they are — they're filled with courage, strength, and hope."

Special Care Services assists injured workers for the duration of their claims. Although the team is located in Richmond, B.C., it provides expertise to WorkSafeBC case managers throughout B.C., so that

severely injured workers can have equal access to services and benefits.

Here's a snapshot of the people who work in Special Care Services and the services you can receive from them:

For help with your claim

Case managers, special needs officers, and team assistants

Case managers are your first point of contact for all matters related to your claim. They determine your entitlement to benefits, coordinate your access to services, and manage your claim on an ongoing basis. Special needs officers review your need for special allowances, equipment, and prosthetics. Team assistants answer your calls and oversee your travel arrangements and the timeliness of your payments.

For help with your rehabilitation

Medical advisors, nurse advisors, and physiatrists

This team consults on your medical treatment and works with your family physician and home-care providers to ensure you receive the best possible care following your injury.

Occupational therapists and physiotherapists

Occupational therapists evaluate your needs for prosthetics and medical equipment. They also provide recommendations to make your home and vehicle more accessible to you and help you integrate back into your community. Physiotherapists evaluate your needs for medical devices and consult with local providers to ensure your treatment plan address any challenges you may have with your mobility.

Vocational rehabilitation consultants

This team helps you find employment that's both suitable and safe for your circumstances. If you aren't able to return to work, they can assist you in other areas of your life, such as helping you integrate back into your community.

For help with emotional or mental health issues

Psychologists and social workers

If you're having difficulty coping as a result of your injury, this team will arrange for services to help you get better — counseling or therapy, for example — or refer you to services in your community. ■■■