

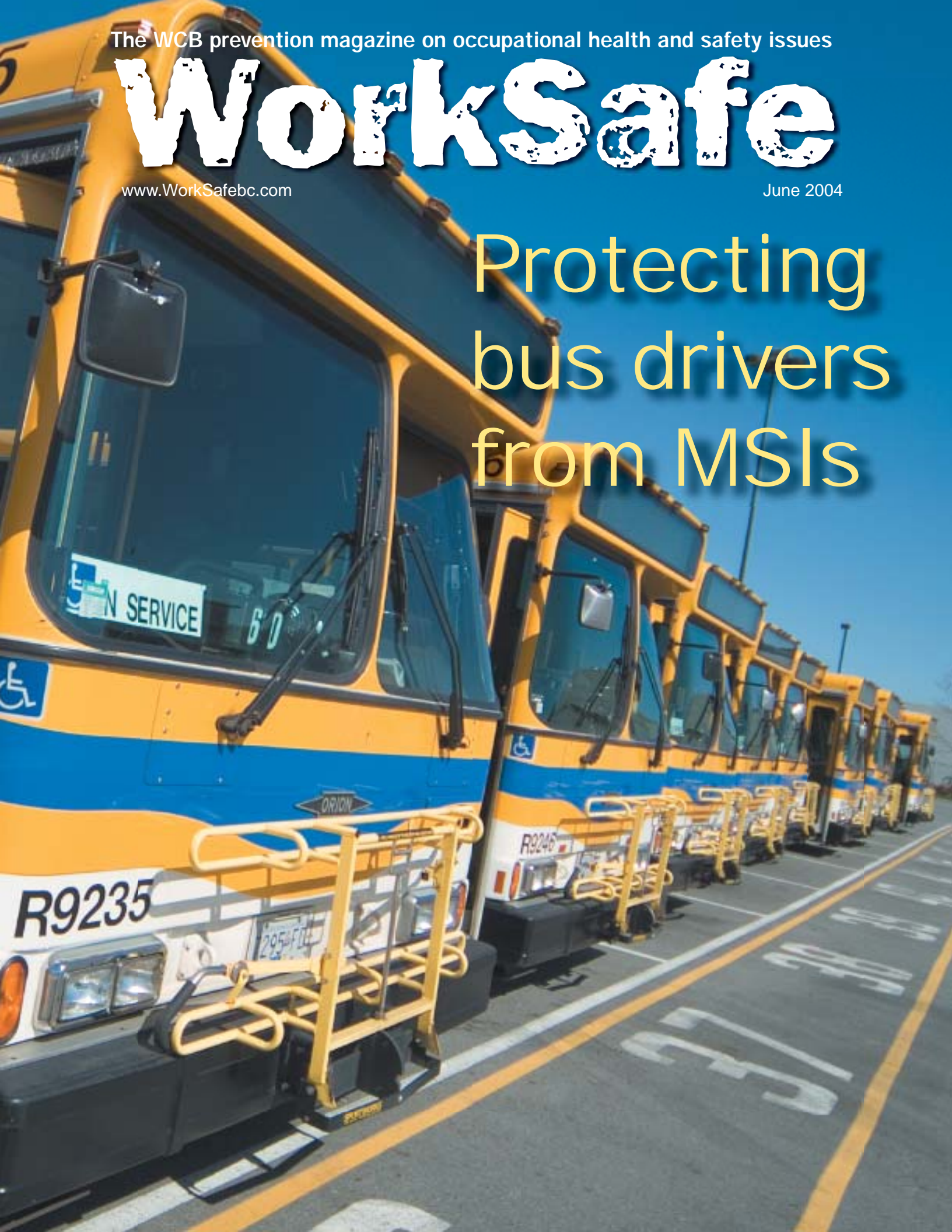
The WCB prevention magazine on occupational health and safety issues

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June 2004

## Protecting bus drivers from MSIs



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## From the editor

Every year at this time, thousands of young people across B.C. throw down their pencils, close their books, and head out into the workforce. It's an exciting time, filled with new friends, new challenges, and new opportunities. What most people don't realize is, it can also be a dangerous time.

Last year in B.C., more than 8,900 young workers were hurt on the job. And six young men and three young women lost their lives at work.

What makes it even more tragic is that each and every one of those injuries could have been prevented.

That's why every spring we make an extra effort to get the message out there. We want young workers – and their employers, friends, and families – to know what the dangers are and how they can protect themselves. We want every young worker in B.C. to come home safe at the end of each day. To find out more, check out the *Be A Survivor* insert tucked into this magazine.

At the WCB, our number one job is to keep workers safe. But we can't do it alone. We rely on you – the workers, employers, and union and industry representatives of British Columbia. We also need your help to make *WorkSafe Magazine* a better publication. If you have questions or comments about this issue or ideas for future issues, please e-mail them to us at [worksafe@wcb.bc.ca](mailto:worksafe@wcb.bc.ca).

## Letters

Re: Article entitled “Yacht builder sets sail for safety” in the April issue of *WorkSafe Magazine*

“Thank you for your article highlighting West Bay SonShip Yachts’ success in our journey to be world class in safety. The article mentioned that West Bay employs some transient and unskilled workers. That statement is incorrect. At West Bay, we manufacture some of the finest luxury yachts in the world. To do so requires all skilled and committed employees.”

– *Bill Dykstra, safety manager, West Bay SonShip Yachts Ltd.*

**Editor’s note:** Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention. We recognize that it takes commitment and dedication for an organization to become “world class in safety” and apologize for the error.

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on occupational health and safety issues

# WorkSafe

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# Understanding West Nile virus



By Gina Lego

## **Q. What is West Nile virus?**

West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne virus that first appeared in North America in 1999 in the eastern United States. It has since been moving westward. To date, the virus has been reported in seven provinces (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta) and in most of continental U.S.A.

West Nile virus is generally transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes feed on infected birds, and then pass the virus on to humans and other animals.

## **Q. Is it dangerous?**

That depends. Most people infected with West Nile virus experience no symptoms at all. About 20 percent of those infected develop mild flu-like symptoms which persist for a week or so. An even smaller number – fewer than one percent of those bitten by an infected mosquito – become severely ill.

## **Q. What is the current risk of infection for B.C. workers?**

In B.C., the risk of infection is thought to be extremely low. At publication time, no cases had yet been reported in this province.

While there's no way to predict when the first case will occur, Health Canada suggests it's possible the virus will be detected in B.C. sometime this summer. Therefore, anyone working in an occupation that is at risk should take the necessary precautions.

## **Q. Which workers are most at risk of contracting West Nile virus?**

Workers at the highest risk of infection are those who work outdoors when mosquitoes are biting, usually from mid-May until late September. They include foresters, tree planters, landscapers, groundskeepers, surveyors, construction workers, pavers, roofers, painters, farmers, and agriculture workers.

## **Q. What can I do to reduce the risk of infection?**

- Eliminate sources of standing water (where mosquitoes might lay their eggs).
- If at all possible, avoid working outdoors, particularly in weedy, brushy, or wooded areas.
- If you must work outdoors, wear shoes, socks, long pants, and long-sleeved shirts. Choose light-coloured clothing. Tightly woven material will

## Reduce your risk of infection

help prevent mosquitoes from biting through to the skin.

- Spray clothing and exposed skin with an insect repellent that contains DEET. Be sure to follow the directions for use carefully, and above all, do not inhale the repellent.

## **Q. What should I do if I think I've been exposed to West Nile virus?**

As with the flu, a mild case of West Nile virus will improve on its own, and medical attention is not usually necessary. However, if you experience a sudden onset of severe symptoms, such as a severe headache, high fever, or confusion, seek medical attention immediately.

While there is no specific treatment for the infection, if your doctor suspects you have contracted the virus, a blood test will be conducted to confirm the diagnosis.

## **Q. Will the WCB compensate workers who develop serious illness due to infection by West Nile virus?**

If the WCB determines that the infected worker was likely bitten by an infected mosquito while on the job, the WCB will pay compensation benefits.

For more information about West Nile virus, visit the WCB online at [www.WorkSafebc.com](http://www.WorkSafebc.com).





# Protecting bus drivers from MSIs

By Corey Van't Haaff

**Coast Mountain Bus Company develops a tool for assessing the ergonomic risks faced by transit drivers.**

**F**our years ago, Coast Mountain Bus Company had a problem. Its drivers were reporting a lot of soft-tissue injuries; its claim costs were on the rise.

“We needed to find ways to reduce those injuries,” says Larry Spouler, Coast Mountain’s occupational health and safety officer, “and to do that we needed to understand the ergonomics of the job. Was it the workstation itself that was causing the problem or the way the operators were relating to that workstation?” They were determined to get to the source.

That was a challenge, says Isabel Krueger, Coast Mountain’s manager of corporate safety. The drivers’

complaints, such as shoulder pops, lower back pain, and wrist problems, were so varied, it was hard to determine the cause. But the problem could not be ignored. The musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs) were frustrating to the drivers and costly to the company.

In commercial bus operations, roughly one-third of all the claims, claim costs, and days lost arise from MSIs. And approximately 64 percent of the claimants who suffer those MSIs are bus drivers.

## ***Assessing ergonomic risks***

Spouler and his colleagues turned to Gordon Harkness, WCB senior ergonomist, for assistance, but were soon informed that there weren’t any standards or guidelines for identifying and assessing ergonomic risks specifically for bus drivers.

That didn’t stop Coast Mountain. If a tool didn’t exist, we’d have to create

one, said Spouler. “We needed to develop a tool that would help identify the potential hazards associated with driving activities like reaching, applying force to operate controls, and turning the steering wheel. We needed to undertake a task analysis.”

With funding assistance from the WCB, Coast Mountain began a study of how drivers drive. “We did an analysis, monitoring the movement of operators in the performance of their duties,” says Spouler. They measured the length of shifts, number of turns on different routes, how many seconds each turn took, and the amount of pressure drivers had to apply to operate controls. They then turned their attention to ergonomic standards, to determine if the job’s requirements put drivers over certain frequency limits. Using those limits, they developed an industry standard for transit.



The task of driving a bus isn't always, in and of itself, the problem, says Harkness. "Some MSIs are the result of inappropriate sitting positions or not taking advantage of the ergonomic features of the bus."

### Identifying the problem areas

Knowing this, transit drivers can adopt preventive measures to reduce their risk. To help them do this, Coast Mountain has developed a checklist that can be used as a preventive and educational tool, either pre- or post-injury.

"It's an evidence-based checklist," says Harkness, "based on research in the public domain. The assessor systematically works through the list, looking at posture, repetitive motion, and the force that needs to be applied to operate certain equipment." It's especially useful because it can be adapted for use for all drivers, not just transit operators. And it's easy to use.

"It's drivers evaluating drivers," says Krueger.

Once the checklist is complete, the results identify awkward postures or frequently repeated motions that may, over time, cause strain. Drivers can use that information to minimize or reduce the risks, for example by adjusting the placement of seats or foot pedals.

"The objective was to develop an evidence-based tool to assess exposure to the specific physical demands of driving a bus," says Harkness. "This new tool appears to have met that objective."

### Available to all

Both Coast Mountain and the WCB agreed to share this preventive and educational tool with the rest of the transit industry at no cost. "If anyone finds a way of preventing injuries, we all want to know about it," says Krueger. "Safety is sharing."

Now that the tool is available, the next step will be to use it in the field. Krueger says the tool was well-accepted by drivers during the development phase. The company has trained other transit companies as well as WCB ergonomic resource officers who can offer advice on the application of the tool.

"We're supportive of it," says Don MacLeod, president of Coast Mountain's union, CAW local 111, who sits on the central safety committee. "Anything that identifies things that could be done differently to reduce or eliminate some of these injuries – the safety committee saw the value of it."

Harkness says the tool was an excellent value. The WCB provided \$9,575 toward the project, which totaled \$22,500.

"It enables the industry to implement effective control measures to ensure the safety and well-being of its operators. This is a good step forward for the industry."

### Here's how it works

The Ergonomic Hazard Assessment Tool for Bus Drivers is a simple eight-page checklist that lets you assess the risks that drivers face by monitoring their movements on the job. You don't need an ergonomic specialist to complete the checklist – with practice and some training, anyone can do it. You simply watch the operator drive the bus and answer a series of questions about that driver's movements and position.

The checklist also describes modifications that can be made to address any given problem. For example, if you determine that the driver uses awkward shoulder postures, you may be able to eliminate the problem (or lower the incidence to an acceptable level) by tilting the steering column, adjusting the seat, or changing the driver's seated posture.

During the assessment, you'll be asked to look at the following:

- Shoulder postures
- Force required to operate foot pedals
- Seat position: suspension, thigh support, breathability of fabric
- Illumination of controls and displays
- Horizontal and vertical reach: how far the driver needs to reach to operate the radio, steering wheel, etc.

To download a copy of the checklist or view a list of engineering design solutions for a bus driver's cab, visit the WCB online at <http://ergonomics.healthandsafetycentre.org/s/Resources.asp?ReportID=24352>.

To contact Coast Mountain's occupational health and safety officer, e-mail [larry\\_spouler@translink.bc.ca](mailto:larry_spouler@translink.bc.ca).



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# Treating mild to moderate brain injuries

By Helena Bryan

**M**uch studied, but not fully understood, there's nothing simple about brain injuries. They can cause a frightening array of symptoms, from nausea and dizziness to headaches, paralysis, and seizures – or more subtle cognitive impairments such as memory loss or personality change – yet they are most often invisible, hiding inside skulls that look perfectly normal.

Left unidentified, a brain injury can end one worker's career, while throwing another headfirst into depression. Or it can go virtually unnoticed. It all depends on a complicated set of factors that often has less to do with the injury and more to do with the age, psychosocial background, and overall health of the victim. Despite the complexities, one thing is clear: the earlier a brain injury is identified, assessed, and treated, the better the outcome.

That's why the WCB has undertaken a one-year pilot program for workers with mild to moderate brain injuries.

"We already know how to deal with the severe injuries," says senior client services manager Klaus Kohlmeyer, who oversees program staff. "But before we began this project, the WCB didn't have any programs in place specifically for workers suffering from less severe brain damage."

## Education is key

Launched in November 2003, the pilot is modelled after a program in Alberta in which front line WCB staff are trained to identify the early symptoms of brain injuries and help injured workers access the appropriate treatment services.

Says Kohlmeyer, "Symptoms can be overwhelming because most people haven't experienced them before. If the problem is not identified, people can become anxious or depressed. A major part of intervention is education and setting realistic expectations. People need to know that most symptoms are temporary and will eventually go away."

## A team approach

Under the pilot program, any claim in the Lower Mainland involving a head injury is routed to the specialized pilot team – an entitlement officer, three case managers, a team assistant, a medical advisor, and a psychology advisor.

More complicated cases may be referred to the Columbia Treatment Program in Vancouver where a neuropsychologist will assess the exact nature of the injury and develop an appropriate management plan. "Basically, what we're doing is treating claims with more confidence and providing better access to treatment," says Dr. Ailve McNestry, WCB manager of medical services and the pilot's project manager.

Today the pilot program deals exclusively with workers in the Lower Mainland. However, if the pilot is deemed a success, the WCB will look at offering this type of service throughout B.C.

## Managing expectations

One of the central goals of the program is to get people back to work. "Not being able to work is tough enough," observes McNestry. "Coupled with a brain injury, it can be devastating. Medically, being cut off from your workplace can be the worst thing for you. And we know that the longer injured workers stay away from work, the less likely they are to go back."

"The good news," says Kohlmeyer, "is that, with appropriate intervention, most people with brain injuries can get back to work and a normal life."

But what's "appropriate" varies substantially from person to person. Brain injuries affect people very differently, says McNestry. "Some people, for example, may experience severe memory loss, but if they don't rely on memory to function, they might not even notice the difference. But a corporate lawyer experiencing even slight memory impairment might feel it's the end of his or her career. Or, if a person is not social by nature, even a mild brain injury can tip him into total isolation; whereas, if he had eight siblings who took turns inviting him over for lunch or dinner, he'd likely remain connected and be okay."

Recovery is often about managing the symptoms rather than treating the injury and everybody needs to know what to expect, says McNestry.

## What's next?

For the program team, the next step is to develop claim management guidelines for the program, including recommendations as to whether it should be offered regionally, centrally, or at all WCB locations. Among the considerations: the skill set required to properly interview claimants with brain injuries and the limited treatment programs available outside the Lower Mainland.

Whatever the final decision, people who suffer brain injuries on the job will have improved, dedicated assessment and treatment programs to assist them in their medical recovery and return to work.

## What we've learned

Here are some of the findings of the pilot project:

- 80 percent of brain injuries are minor, 15 percent are moderate, and 5 percent are severe.
- Most brain injuries are caused by slips and falls (in the winter months), bumps to the head (e.g., hitting your head on an object or an object falling on your head), and motor vehicle accidents.
- Injuries occur in a wide variety of industries and locations (construction, the waterfront, to teachers involved in recreational activities), although – perhaps not surprisingly – the ski industry is especially susceptible.
- In the Lower Mainland, there are an average of six claims a day for mild to moderate brain injuries, double the number expected.
- Claimants suffering from brain injuries tend to be either young (between 18 and 25) or over 45 years old.
- Young victims tend to have had multiple brain injuries. (One 19-year-old claimant had eight prior brain injuries).
- Brain injuries can be complicated by pre-existing problems such as marital problems or substance abuse.



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# Education program builds knowledge and trust

By Jeffrey Rotin



Ron Thiessen, Respiratory Services educator, demonstrates how a bronchoscopy can generate bioaerosols during a one-day training session for WCB safety and hygiene officers.

B.C.'s health care professionals share knowledge with WCB safety and hygiene officers.

**W**CB occupational hygiene and safety officers often visit workplaces to give health and safety presentations. Now they're turning the tables by having industry experts train them on the latest health and safety issues in the workplace. It's yet another way in which the WCB is working with B.C. industries to help build safer worksites.

In early May, experts from the health care field held an infection control seminar for WCB safety and hygiene officers. The seminar, which combined peer-to-peer training with external expertise, gave the officers the opportunity to learn the latest procedures and practices at work in B.C.'s hospitals and health units.

The idea emerged during recent health crises – most notably last year's SARS outbreak – when the WCB collaborated with the health care community.

According to Laurence Svirchev, a WCB occupational hygiene officer currently serving as liaison between the WCB and the Health Employers Association of B.C., WCB officers and infection control specialists haven't always understood each other's disciplines and perspectives, though they share common goals. As a result, the WCB decided to invite health care professionals to help bridge this gap.

Leading the one-day professional development seminar were two infection control specialists: Dr. Elizabeth Bryce of Vancouver General Hospital and Dr. Michael Noble of the University of British Columbia. Their session focused on the principles of infection control in hospitals, with particular attention to airborne infectious aerosols. Topics included the control and surveillance of respiratory diseases and risk assessments. The session combined classroom instruction with a hands-on demonstration of hospital equipment and an overview of resources.

## ***Understanding bioaerosols***

Bob Janssen, WCB occupational hygiene officer and a member of the Canadian Standards Association's Respiratory Protection Committee, offered peer-to-peer training with a talk entitled Characteristics of Bioaerosols and Protecting the Respiratory System.

The course was designed for WCB occupational hygiene and safety officers who deal with regional health authorities, as well as WCB employees who handle prevention and compensation matters for the health care sector.

"Using the scientific knowledge gained from this professional development

course, we'll develop policies and procedures for the WCB," says Svirchev.

## ***Improving credibility***

Other industries have expressed interest in holding similar training sessions for WCB officers. They want to ensure that the officers who inspect their workplaces understand their business, says Ray Roch, WCB regional director of field operations.

This sort of training initiative offers a number of benefits both to the WCB and the industries themselves. WCB officers gain up-to-date knowledge on current industry practices and related health and safety issues. The training helps them to understand industry lingo and enhances their standing as health and safety authorities. "It improves the credibility of the officers when you have a provincial group like infection control in health care providing the training," says Roch.

This training initiative is part of a broader strategy to refine WCB officer learning and professional development.

For more information, contact Bryan Collett, manager, WCB Staff Learning and Development, at 604 233-4005.

Jean Potvin adjusts to life as a paraplegic after a tragic workplace accident.



# Don't let it happen to you

By Gina Lego

**W**hen you head off to work, you seldom think that harm will come your way. But sometimes it does and, as Jean Potvin discovered, when you're on the job, one small slip-up can change your life forever.

For Potvin, May 1, 2003 started like any other day. He got up, had breakfast, and headed off to his job as a heavy duty mechanic for Fraser Valley Septic Tank Services. That day, he was tasked with working on a street sweeper, a heavy-duty truck used to clean streets, gutters, and alleyways.

Potvin can't explain what happened next. To this day, he has no memory of the accident. What he has been told is he was outside the sweeper on the ground with the tank over his head. Knowing the

task wouldn't take long, he hadn't taken safety precautions to secure the tank. After all, it would just take a minute to get the job done.

Tragically, that minute was all it took. It's believed he slipped, touching a lever that sent the tank crashing down onto him.

A mechanic working nearby first heard a pail of oil crash to the ground, then saw the tank fall, crushing his friend and co-worker.

## *The devastating news*

The realization set in when Potvin woke up in hospital six days later. He knew his life would never be the same. "I couldn't move my legs. But being on medication, you don't realize the extent, or what it means. Then, as you ride the wave of

emotion, you realize that it has changed everything."

At first his wife, Mélanie, was told he wouldn't survive the day, and if he did, he'd be a quadriplegic with a brain injury. "You can imagine what state of emotion my wife was in when the doctors told her that," says Potvin.

But survive he did. And today, after two months in hospital and a further two months at G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre, Potvin has made remarkable physical progress. Mentally, however, he continues to struggle. He has difficulty concentrating and suffers severe mood swings. His three daughters, Noémie (age 8), Melina (age 6), and Rébecca

*Continued on page 12*



*Continued from page 11*

(age 4), don't understand this change in their dad.

"Somehow they know that I'm different, but I'm still the same dad," he explains. "I'm afraid my mood swings are going to teach them that it's okay to yell when you're tired – to not be nice to people. That's not the way I was with my kids before. I'm afraid I'll have a bad influence on them."

As for Mélanie, Potvin says she's lost a lot. "I'm not the same person I was. I would say she lost her husband."

In December, after months in hospital, Potvin was able to return home. "It was," says Potvin, "the best Christmas present I could ever have." With Potvin now a paraplegic, his entire family is learning to adjust. The accident will forever change how they live their lives. A modified Mazda MPV Minivan makes



getting around easier for the 36-year-old French Canadian. He welcomes any activity that can normalize life for him and his children.

Meanwhile, to those who believe safety gear is not worth the effort, Potvin offers some wise words of advice: "Always think safety first. It only took five seconds to change my life. Those few seconds took away a lot from me and my family; things we can never get back."

**“It only took five seconds to change my life.”**



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Press operator Ana Mrkalj is one of many who benefit from the noise reduction at a Burnaby foil products plant.

## Steel springs reduce noise and vibration

By Jeffrey Rotin

In the '60s, the Beach Boys may have sung about “Good, good, good, good vibrations,” but today most people would agree that vibrations aren’t so good – especially in the workplace.

Vibration, and the sound it creates, was a real problem for employees at the Alcan Foil Products plant in Burnaby. But now, thanks to an ingenious solution, the problem has all but disappeared.

The Alcan plant uses large punch presses to stamp out foil containers such as pie plates and TV dinner trays. When aluminum is fed into the presses, each downstroke generates a whopping 50 tonnes of pressure. At 80 strokes per minute for each press, that’s a lot of pounding. And a lot of noise.

### **The whole building shook**

When the Burnaby plant was first built, elastomeric anti-vibration mounts – essentially large rubber pads – were placed underneath the presses to help absorb the vibration. But since the plant sits on a bog, the vibration passed through the concrete floor, sending out waves like when pebbles are dropped into water, creating a steady, echoing “boom, boom, boom”. Compounding the

problem was the fact that the floor, built on pilings, shook like a drum.

“You could hear and feel the vibration way down at the opposite end of the building,” says Dan Klashinsky, Alcan’s production supervisor. The constant pounding took its toll on employees, leaving them drained by the end of the day.

Over time, that kind of pounding can result in hearing loss – the most common occupational disease in B.C. Cutting out workplace noise not only reduces hearing loss, but can also reduce absenteeism and improve productivity.

### **An innovative solution**

As part of its environmental and employee safety mandate to continuously improve the workplace, Alcan began seeking ways to reduce the noise and vibration. Klashinsky contacted Chris Wolfe of Vibra-Sonic Control in Burnaby, a company that specializes in noise and vibration control. Wolfe examined the problem, then installed new anti-vibration mounts with heavy-duty springs made from half-inch thick steel. These new mounts had more give, to fully absorb the vibration. Side brackets were welded a few inches up

from the press base and springs were placed underneath the brackets.

Today, while the plant is not noise-free, the irritating boom is gone and the floor no longer shakes. “There’s zero energy going into the floor now,” says Klashinsky. “It’s all absorbed by the springs.”

This resourceful solution was relatively inexpensive and saved Alcan the hassle of raising the presses and conveyor belts to accommodate the higher spring mounts.

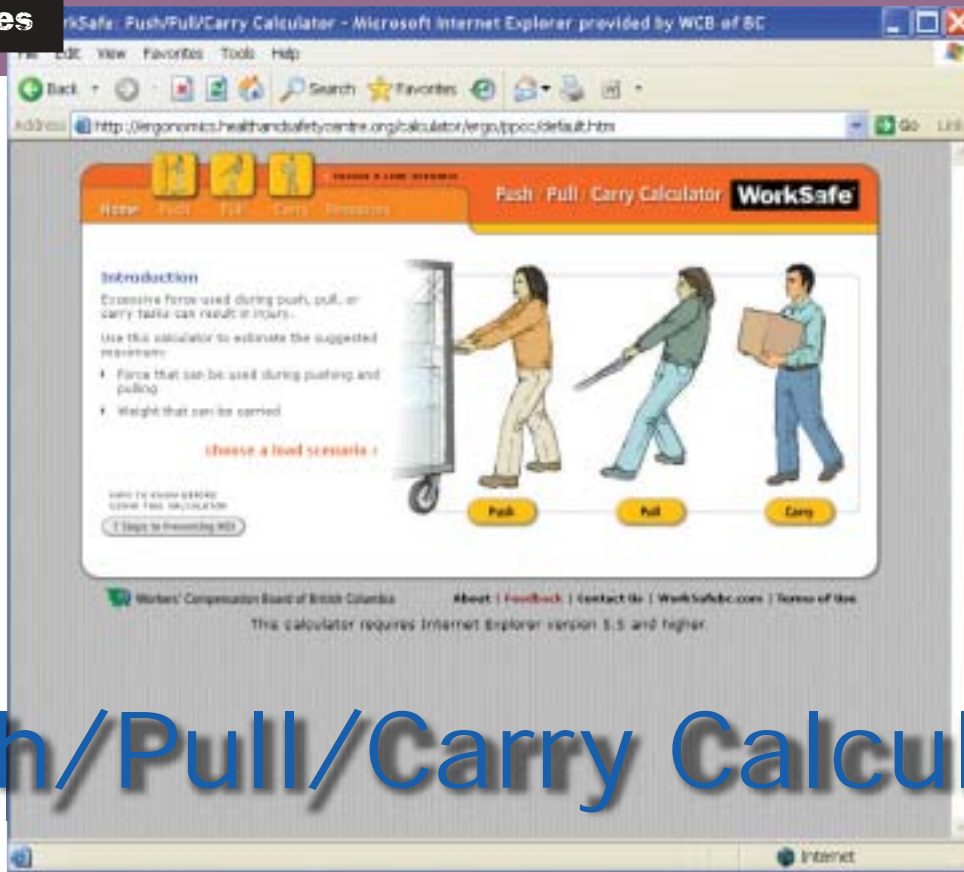
### **Choose carefully**

“It’s the same sort of thing you’d see underneath bridges to protect them from seismic activity, so the bridges can move without getting damaged,” explains Stuart Eaton, a WCB engineer.

“As a first measure for noise control, it’s good practice to install a vibrating machine on anti-vibration mounts,” says Eaton. “But you should be careful to select the correct mounts.” Choosing the wrong mounts can actually intensify the noise.

For more information about controlling noise levels in the workplace, call Stuart Eaton at 604 276-3210 or Christine Harrison, WCB occupational audiologist, at 604 276-3136.





# Push/Pull/Carry Calculator

**D**o your workers push, pull, or carry objects on the job? If so, they may be at risk for musculoskeletal injury (MSI). Now, a new online tool can help you assess that risk.

The Push/Pull/Carry Calculator was developed by WCB ergonomists, using accepted assessment methodology, to help employers determine if their workers are using excessive force when pushing, pulling, or carrying objects in the workplace. Using excessive force can cause injury to the arms, shoulders, and back. Injury can result from a single traumatic event, such as pulling a cart with poorly maintained wheels, or from repetitive exertion over a long period of time, such as pulling lumber from a green chain.

Push/pull forces are affected by many factors, including the worker's body weight and strength; the size, shape, and weight of the load; the frequency of the task being performed; and the

distance the object is being pushed or pulled. Using the WCB's new Push/Pull/Carry Calculator, you can quickly estimate the maximum force a worker should use when pushing or pulling an object – or the maximum weight the individual should carry.

### Assessing the risk

Supporting this tool is a guidance sheet that helps you identify and assess the risks, and offers suggestions for ways to eliminate or reduce the need to push/pull/carry.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, employers aren't required to use this tool, but they are required to identify factors in the workplace that may expose their workers to risk of MSIs. And if a risk is identified, employers must assess that risk. This tool provides a fast, easy method for doing so.

To access the calculator, visit <http://ergonomics.healthandsafetycentre.org/calculator/ergo/ppcc/intro.htm>.





### New video for supervisors

Did you know that young workers are more likely than older, more experienced workers to rely on their immediate supervisors for health and safety training? Yet many supervisors don't fully understand their responsibilities for the health and safety of workers under their supervision.

The WCB, in partnership with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, has created a new video to address this issue.

The Supervisor is a docudrama that examines issues related to supervisor responsibility for workplace health and safety. It graphically depicts the emotional, legal, and financial consequences of a fictionalized workplace accident that leads to the death of a young worker.

To purchase a copy of the video, go online to <http://youngworker.healthandsafetycentre.org/s/Resources-Supervisors.asp>.

### WCB 2003 Annual Report

The Workers' Compensation Board of B.C. had a milestone year in 2003. To find out why, check out the WCB's *2003 Annual Report and 2004 - 2006 Service Plan*, available online at [http://www.worksafebc.com/publications/reports/annual\\_reports/default.asp](http://www.worksafebc.com/publications/reports/annual_reports/default.asp). You can also view *Statistics 2003*, a supplement that provides information about occupational health and safety issues and industry trends in B.C.

To order a copy of the executive summary, *2003 Year in Review*, call

Adrienne Maxwell at 604 279-7572, local 3512, or e-mail [amaxwell@wcb.bc.ca](mailto:amaxwell@wcb.bc.ca).



### Warning! Confined spaces can kill

Confined space accidents are rare, but they can be deadly.

Last year in B.C., a welder entered a flotation compartment in a barge hull to check for cracks. He never made it out alive. Another four workers almost lost their lives when they entered that same compartment, one by one, in an attempt to rescue those already inside. All four lost consciousness but were ultimately rescued and revived.

But it's not just entering a confined space that poses a risk. Even sticking your head through the opening can be dangerous. In 1997, two workers who were repairing a process vessel at a pulp mill died from lack of oxygen. The first one entered the vessel – a confined space – and collapsed from oxygen deficiency. The second, who'd been watching from outside, was found after he had collapsed with his head inside the vessel. He never recovered.

To make sure you don't suffer a similar fate, you need to understand confined spaces – what they are, the hazard they present, and what sort of safety precautions you should take before you step inside.

To learn more, visit the WCB's online Health and Safety Centre at <http://confinedspaces.healthandsafetycentre.org>. Here are just a few of the resources you'll find there:

- Confined space hard hat sticker
- Confined space poster
- Bulletin describing how to identify a confined space
- Pocket card – A handy reference card that workers can tuck in their pockets
- Information booklets for the municipalities & construction, food & beverage, and shipping & transportation industries

And look for a standard practices booklet to be posted on our web site, [WorkSafebc.com](http://WorkSafebc.com), later this year.





# Competition showcases first aid elite

## Canadian Emergency Responder Championships 2004

Saturday, July 31 - Sunday, August 1

University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, B.C.

By Gina Lego

**T**his summer, the UBC Aquatic Centre will host the first national Canadian Emergency Responder Championships. Firefighters, police officers, paramedics, lifeguards, and other first responders will go head-to-head to vie for the title of top team in Canada.

“Occupational first aid attendants spend years training for situations that may one day test their abilities in the workplace,” says Declan Lawlor, president of the Academy of Emergency Training, the organization hosting the event. “Competitions give them the opportunity to challenge themselves and test their training in a realistic environment.”

To date, 150 competitors have signed up to compete in one of three categories:

- Aquatic Emergency Responders (lifeguards)
- First Responders (firefighters and occupational first aid attendants)
- Paramedics

Teams will be judged on their ability to assess situations, respond quickly, and attend to patients' needs. Prizes and trophies will be awarded to individual contestants and teams, with a \$2,000 cash prize going to the top team in each category.

### Competition events

The two-day competition will include the following events:

- **First Aid Scenarios**  
Each four-person team will have 5 to 12 minutes to respond to a simulated accident with multiple patients.
- **Individual Skills**  
Each team member will be given three minutes to assess and treat a patient.
- **Priority Action Assessment**  
Each team will have 90 seconds to triage and treat several patients on the scene of a mini-disaster.
- **Emergency Driving Skills**  
First responder and paramedic teams will demonstrate their ability to operate an emergency vehicle in the face of varying road hazards.

In addition, lifeguards will test their skills in a series of mock accidents and incidents in and around a pool.

### Get caught-up in the excitement

“There is a feeling of camaraderie at these events, where competitors watch and learn from each other while witnessing new techniques and approaches to optimize patient care,” says Lawlor. “Retired WCB officers, first aid instructors, paramedics, and physicians will work together to create some of the most entertaining and challenging situations for competitors and spectators.”

The event is open to the public and will conclude on Sunday evening with an awards gala for competitors, judges, and volunteers. For more information, contact Tanya at the Academy of Emergency Training at 604 521-2170 or e-mail [tanya@firstaid.bc.ca](mailto:tanya@firstaid.bc.ca).



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# Infractions

The purpose of "Infractions," a regular item in *WorkSafe Magazine*, is to highlight the importance of making workplaces safe. The WCB Compliance Section and the editors of *WorkSafe Magazine* believe British Columbians should know who has been penalized and why. We hope this information will help make B.C. workplaces safer. The delay between the date of infractions and publication of the infractions in this magazine is partially a result of allowing time for employers and other interested parties to respond to the initial penalty and for the appeal process.

Note: Dates shown indicate when infractions were imposed. Addresses shown are locations where infractions occurred, and not necessarily the addresses of the penalized businesses.

**684945 SR200200615**

**Aug. 21, 2003**

**\$1,000**

Birla Investments Ltd.

DBA Somass Hotel

5251 Argyle Street, Port Alberni

Repeat orders regarding environmental tobacco smoke and notice of compliance.

**2030 SR200200535**

**Aug. 27, 2003**

**\$19,450**

City of North Vancouver

Fire & Rescue, Fire Hall No. 1

165 East 13 Street, North Vancouver

More than 50 unprotected workers were exposed to airborne asbestos during seismic renovations at Fire Hall No. 1 due to two significant failures by the City of North Vancouver:

- Failure to disclose hazard information about the presence of asbestos in textured ceiling material
- Failure to maintain an effective asbestos management program based on regular documented inspections and the effective identification of all known asbestos materials

**656539 SR200300148**

**Aug. 29, 2003**

**\$5,000**

Akash Roofing Ltd.

15310 – 96 Avenue, Surrey

Failure to ensure the use of a fall protection system in areas where a fall of more than 3 metres (10 feet) could occur.

**366494 SR200300233**

**Oct. 10, 2003**

**\$19,565**

I-XL Brick Supplies Ltd.

3595 East 1 Avenue, Vancouver

Failure to instruct forklift operators on no-rider policy and to stop the unsafe practice of allowing passengers on forklifts.

**633267 SR200200240**

**Nov. 18, 2003**

**\$44,427**

Dominion Exploration Canada Ltd.

Domcan Wilder

A-11-1-83-20 W6M, Monias Field (west of Fort St. John)

Repeat failure by a prime contractor to ensure that subcontractors' activities were coordinated to ensure the health and safety of all workers on the site. As a result, a young worker died.

## WorkSafe™ courses

Six one-day WorkSafe education courses are offered by the WCB WorkSafe Education Network.

- Hazard Recognition and Control
- Joint Health and Safety Committee Training
- Occupational Health and Safety in Small Business
- Preventing and Investigating Musculoskeletal Injury (MSI)
- Preventing Workplace Violence
- Supervisor Safety Management

For more information visit the WorkSafe courses web page at [www.worksafebc.com/news/worksafe\\_courses/default.asp](http://www.worksafebc.com/news/worksafe_courses/default.asp), or call the Prevention Information Line at 604 276-3100, toll-free in B.C. at 1 888 621-SAFE (7233).

## Did you know?

- In B.C., back strain accounts for one-quarter of all WCB claims.
- In 2003 alone, more than 14,000 workers suffered back strain on the job.
- Most back strains are caused by lifting, pushing, pulling, and similar exertions.

To find out how you can avoid becoming one of these statistics, visit the WCB's Back at Work site at

**Do you need a First Aid Attendant for your workplace?**

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## Saving backs, one lift at a time

Protecting health care workers in British Columbia is critical.

Our people-handling solutions:

- ◆ Eliminate workplace injuries caused by lifting, transferring and repositioning people
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- ◆ Reduce repetitive strain to workers
- ◆ Promote a healthier workplace

Angel Accessibility Solutions has the expertise to design and implement your system.

We provide:

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Angel adheres to all WCB regulations on patient lifts.

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# WCB contact centre helps small construction firms

By Robin Schooley

**E**ver wonder who to contact if you have a question about the WCB? If you operate a small construction business, help is just a phone call away.

The WCB recently opened the Small Business Contact Centre for Construction to give employers with small businesses a single point of contact at the Board. Staffed by WCB specialists with construction industry knowledge, the centre is geared to respond to the unique needs of small construction firms. They can call to report injuries or to get help with everything from managing claims to establishing return-to-work programs, filling out WCB forms, and building safer workplaces.

Established as a pilot project, the contact centre is an initiative undertaken in cooperation with the Construction Safety Association of B.C. Construction was chosen to launch the pilot because it is the largest sector among small businesses in B.C.

The idea for the pilot grew from the fact that many small businesses have little contact with the WCB. In fact, aside from reporting their payroll and paying their premiums each year, they may have no interaction with the WCB at all. This can be a challenge for employers when they have a claim. When an injury

occurs, these employers may not be aware of what they are required to do to meet their legal obligations.

“Most construction industry employers operate small businesses with fewer than 20 employees,” says Cindy Wallis, manager of the contact centre.

“As such, they typically don’t have enough claims to designate one person as their WCB expert. When there’s a claim or they need some help filling out a form or learning more about health and safety initiatives, they

can be at a loss.

“This contact centre helps us be more responsive to their needs.”

To reach the Small Business Contact Centre for Construction, call 604 233-5353, toll-free at 1 866 338-3888, Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. You can also fax the centre at 604 233-5360, toll-free at 1 866 616-2558, or e-mail [smallbiz@wcb.bc.ca](mailto:smallbiz@wcb.bc.ca).



# Mark your calendar!

## Mayday exhibit: "Catching Fish, Saving Lives"

Fishing is often called the most dangerous job in the world. Find out why at Mayday – Catching Fish, Saving Lives, a new interactive exhibit that features a series of dramatic real-life search and rescue stories from B.C.'s commercial fishing industry.

The exhibit, sponsored in part by the WCB, runs until October 31 at the Gulf of Georgia Cannery, a Parks Canada National Historic Site in Richmond, B.C. From there it will travel to fishing communities along the B.C. coast. For more information, visit [http://www.pc.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/bc/georgia/ne/index\\_e.asp](http://www.pc.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/bc/georgia/ne/index_e.asp), phone 604 664-9009, or e-mail [gog.info@pc.gc.ca](mailto:gog.info@pc.gc.ca).

## Construction safety courses

If you work in the construction industry, how do you educate yourself about safety and avoid both injuries and WCB penalties?

Check out the latest courses from the Construction Safety Association of B.C. (CSABC). The CSABC offers affordable, recognized training for owners/senior managers, supervisors, and workers in the construction industry. All courses, selected and developed by an advisory committee made up of industry leaders, are offered both in the Lower Mainland and around B.C.

To view the course schedule, visit the WCB's Construction Health and Safety Centre at <http://construction.healthandsafetycentre.org/s/CoursesAndEvents.asp>. To register, contact the CSABC at 604 321-2651, toll-free at 1 886 321-2651.

## Electrical Safety Training

Want to learn how to work safely around electricity? Check out the Electrical Industry Training Institute (EITI), a private institution based in Surrey, B.C., that offers a wide range of trades training, safety training, and industry

awareness courses. Upcoming courses include Underground Utilities Awareness Workshop, High Voltage Close Proximity, and Fall Protection. The institute also offers Safety Fridays on the last Friday of every month.

For more information, visit the institute online at [www.eiti.bc.ca](http://www.eiti.bc.ca) or call Dorothy Amor, program coordinator, at 604 590-8913.

## Canada Awards for Excellence

The Canada Awards for Excellence (CAE) are presented annually to private, public, and not-for-profit organizations that have displayed outstanding performance in the areas of quality and healthy workplaces. Since 1984, the National Quality Institute (NQI) has recognized more than 200 Canadian organizations for their achievements.

The 2004 Excellence Summit & CAE Awards Gala Dinner will be held on October 19 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. For more information, visit [www.nqi.ca](http://www.nqi.ca).

## Used work clothes needed

Do you have any old steel-toed work boots at the back of your closet? How about jeans or work socks that you no longer wear?

The Harvest Project is collecting clothes for people returning to the workforce. The non-profit organization extends "a hand up, not a hand out" to those who are experiencing difficult life circumstances. Each year its Dress for Success program outfits men and women in the community with more than \$100,000 worth of clothing.

Here are some of the items currently in demand:

- Steel-toed boots
- Men's jeans (especially in smaller sizes)
- Hard hats
- Work socks

- Fleece vests, waterproof jackets, sweatshirts, and other items suitable for a construction site

Drop off your donations at the Harvest Project, 201 Bewicke Avenue, North Vancouver. To learn more about the organization, visit [www.harvestproject.org](http://www.harvestproject.org) or call Jolie at 604 983-9488, extension 313.

## Small Business Contact Centre

### for Construction

Do you have WCB-related questions?

We can help.



The Small Business Contact Centre for Construction is a new service designed specifically for construction industry employers. Now there's a single point of contact for all your WCB needs.

- Report claims
- Get help with forms
- Learn more about health and safety
- Understand your rights and responsibilities

Phone: 604 233-5353 or 1 866 338-3888

Fax: 604 233-5360 or 1 866 616-2558

E-mail: [smallbiz@wcb.bc.ca](mailto:smallbiz@wcb.bc.ca)

A joint initiative of the Workers' Compensation Board of BC and the Construction Safety Association of BC

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[www.WorkSafebc.com](http://www.WorkSafebc.com)





**Frustrated** with the high cost of hiring and training new workers?

The WCB's **Hire a Worker** Program can help.

**Hire a Worker** is a free service that gives you access to skilled workers without the usual costs associated with advertising, recruitment, and training. It connects you with skilled job candidates in the WCB's vocational rehabilitation program, then offers training and wage incentives.

- **Post job openings online, quickly and easily**
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- **Give back to the community — hire injured workers who are ready to return to the workforce**

To find out more, contact the WCB's Vocational Rehabilitation Department today.

PHONE: **1 866 266-9404**

E-MAIL: **edap@wcb.bc.ca**

ONLINE: **www.WorkSafebc.com/for\_employers**

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