

## **Backgrounder: New traffic control requirements**

Traffic control people play an important role in road safety by warning motorists about road construction or other activity taking place on the road ahead and assisting with the control of traffic. This work can be dangerous.

To help protect worker safety, WorkSafeBC amended the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation in 1998 so that employers were required to train and instruct traffic control persons “in a course acceptable to the Board.” The change was intended to promote more consistent, safer work practices by standardizing training for traffic control persons across British Columbia.

To date, the only course accepted by WorkSafeBC is a two-day training course offered by the Construction Safety Network — a not-for-profit society, supported by a number of industry associations from the construction sector, that develops and delivers safety-related programs and services.

The Construction Safety Network course is comprehensive; however, many stakeholders find that it covers a number of procedures and situations that are not typically encountered in municipal, general construction, and maintenance operations. Also, in some cases, the course repeats training that experienced workers already have received, such as working in various weather conditions and working around heavy equipment. Some stakeholders have pointed out that the current Regulation unnecessarily limits their traffic control training options.

To address the issue, WorkSafeBC consulted with stakeholders and brought forth proposed amendments for public consultation in December 2005 and January 2006. Based on the feedback received, WorkSafeBC subsequently revised the amendments and took them to a public hearing in May 2006. The revised amendments were approved by WorkSafeBC’s Board of Directors on July 25, 2006.

The changes amend the language in the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation from “trained in a course acceptable to the Board,” to “trained in a manner acceptable to the Board.” With these amendments, traffic control training can now be delivered in a number of ways, tailored to meet specific job requirements. The specification of what is “a manner acceptable to the Board” will be articulated in a guideline.

Stakeholders who find the Construction Safety Network course useful can continue to use it for fulfilling part of their traffic control training needs and obligations.

In addition to the new wording around training requirements, the amendments also provide clarity on various aspects of traffic control safety, affirm specific employer responsibilities, and set out new traffic control equipment requirements that reflect current industry standards. These measures, broadly supported by industry and labour, will help improve safety and reduce injuries and deaths among traffic control people and road workers in B.C.

The new requirements will come into force on January 1, 2007 and will impact a number of sectors that typically implement traffic control, including municipalities, the construction industry, utility companies, emergency response agencies, and the road building and road maintenance sectors.