

B.C.-focused online course provides new, young, and seasoned construction workers current safety basics through the four-part program.

New course primes construction workers in safety

By Marnie Douglas

Starting a new job in construction can be intimidating, especially for young people who don't have a lot of experience but want to make a good impression. Proper training and support are crucial to their success and safety while on the job.

An online safety orientation course aimed at new and young construction workers is helping provide them with the core knowledge and confidence to work safely at any construction site in B.C.

SiteReadyBC was created by the B.C. Construction Safety Alliance (BCCSA) in consultation with stakeholders from the B.C. construction industry. The course was launched in July 2020, and many employers are making its completion mandatory for all workers working at any construction jobsite.

"We require all new employees to receive their SiteReadyBC certificate within three months of starting with the company," says Aaron Jackson, health and safety manager with Scott Construction Group. "In addition to our own safety orientation and our worksite

training for new employees, the SiteReadyBC course is a great foundation for construction safety."

Jackson was one of two dozen stakeholders from the Prime Contractor Technical Advisory Committee involved in developing the course, in conjunction with the BCCSA. He says the committee spent nearly six months fine-tuning the content, ensuring it covers everything from worker rights and responsibilities to jobsite specifics.

He says the benefit to new and young workers is huge, as it provides a footing in construction safety that is consistent across the industry.

Kathy Tull, occupational health and safety consultant (construction) with WorkSafeBC, agrees that the course offers a great starting point that is supported with on-site training.

"The course helps to raise that awareness and gets workers thinking about what hazards they may encounter when they get to the worksite," she says. "It's necessary to have that foundation when you come onto a jobsite."

Tull took the course herself, so she would be familiar with the curriculum and have an understanding of what workers are learning. She found the course very comprehensive and a valuable resource for the industry.

Filling the gap

For years, the BCCSA didn't have their own construction safety training course; Erin Linde, BCCSA's health and safety director, said the BCCSA saw a need for a new, B.C.-based program.

"There was a gap and we saw an opportunity to build a course that was specific to British Columbia, and was for industry, by industry," she explains.

Linde says it was also important that the course be interactive and engaging, and that the user earned a certificate when completed.

The course is delivered online and generally takes between six and eight hours to finish. Students learn at their own pace and, once they start, they have 60 days to complete it. Participants also receive their Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS 2015) certificate as part of the course.

The program is delivered in four parts:

- Part 1 covers B.C. laws and regulations; worker rights and responsibilities; employer responsibilities; hazard management; workplace conduct; and inspections, incident reporting, and investigations.
- Part 2 covers emergency preparedness; workplace general conditions; personal protective equipment; noise hazards; and Canada's WHMIS 2015.
- Part 3 covers manual lifting; tools, machinery, and equipment; mobile equipment; electrical safety; and ladders and scaffolds.
- Part 4 covers demolition; working at heights; excavation and trenching; cranes, hoists, and rigging; and confined space entry.

Linde says not only is the course providing workers with a valuable foundation, but it also holds employers accountable. The program is designed to assist employers in meeting their obligations under B.C.'s Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, which requires them to provide vital safety information to new and young workers.

"Employers still need to provide on-site training and site-specific safety orientations, but this is a tool in the

toolbox," she explains. "From the feedback I've received, the young workers say it gives them confidence to go to the jobsite and ask the right questions, while the older workers are saying they're learning new things even though they may have been in the industry for many years."

Since it launched, almost 6,500 workers have completed the course, and some B.C. companies exclusively use the course for their workers. This fall, an updated version has been launched that allows the course to be read aloud, in multiple languages and visually highlighted, thus increasing accessibility for those who have learning or literacy challenges.

David Romaine, construction safety officer with Scott Construction Group, has worked in construction for nearly 30 years and took the course after starting with Scott Construction in early 2020.

"I knew a lot of it, but it gave me a very different perspective and there was some information I didn't know," he says. "I actually wish that a course like this existed when I was starting in construction, years ago. Safety has changed so much over that time."

Romaine says he's seeing the results at the jobsite — more questions are being asked at site orientations, new employees are more comfortable asking questions, and more workers seem to have a stronger understanding of workplace safety.

Visit BCCSA's [website](#) for more information on the course and to register. 📄

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