

## Contributors



**Ryan Parton**

Ryan is a professional copywriter and the former B.C. regional director for the Professional Writers Association of Canada. In this issue, he covers the complex world of process safety through the oil and gas industry (page 7).



**Gord Woodward**

Since 1994, Gord has operated Enlightening Communications, which services clients in corporate communications and marketing, and provides entrepreneurship training. In “Ask an officer,” he speaks with occupational safety officer Steven Marino on staying safe in orchards and vineyards (page 5).



**Helena Bryan**

From writing about health and safety to creating documents for land treaties, Helena has a diverse history of telling B.C.’s stories. In this issue, she speaks with Rayco Steel out in Sparwood, B.C. about its safety program (page 22).



**Gail Johnson**

Gail is an award-winning journalist and a fitness instructor. In this issue, she looks at another kind of fitness — mental health — in the film industry (page 13).

## Ask an officer

# Ladders, MSIs take high toll on harvest-season workers



**Steven Marino**  
Occupational safety officer

**Region:** Kelowna  
**Years on the job:** 10

As we head into harvest season for fruits and grapes, WorkSafeBC occupational safety officer Steven Marino talks about keeping workers safe in orchards, vineyards, and wineries.

### Q. What are the most common hazards for workers in these industries?

**A.** Injuries in the tree-fruit sector are mostly due to improper use of ladders. Workers not only fall from ladders, but they also accidentally hit others with the ladders, or get hit by falling objects when they’re near ladders. Too often, people make poor choices when using ladders: they’ll try to reposition the ladder while standing on it, or they’ll reach too far and lose balance, or they won’t use a ladder that’s high enough for their needs and will end up standing on the top two steps.

Other hazards include various musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs). In vineyards, workers can be at risk of overexertion from trying to lift or pull too much, or get strains from repetitive motion and awkward postures. While in the winery, there’s also the additional risk of potentially slippery surfaces.

Vineyards and orchards both have the hazards of people working around mobile equipment such as tractors and harvesters, and around machinery used in the packing process.

### Q. What safety issue is often overlooked?

**A.** First aid coverage. If your workforce balloons at certain times of the year, you need to make sure your first aid capabilities are keeping up. A larger workforce could require more training, equipment, and facilities for first aid staff.

**Q. What steps do I need to take to keep my crews safe?**

- A.** You should perform workplace inspections and examine things that can put workers at risk. You might have a mix of experienced farmworkers, new workers, young workers, and contractors, and your operation may include picking and packing, so communication and coordination are important.

Everybody needs to be on the same page and know the hazards in the workplace. This could include activities in adjacent workplaces. For example, you need to prevent workers from having lunch in an area next to an orchard where pesticides might be sprayed at the same time. If you have difficulty communicating verbally due to language barriers, use pictograms, photos, and demonstrations — show your crew how to do things.

Training is also critical, especially in the safe use of ladders. Don't take it for granted that people know how to use them, or other tools and equipment, properly. After training, safe work procedures can break down if there is poor supervision. Supervisors should correct workers on how to choose, use, and move ladders. Ensure they're wearing the appropriate footwear, not sandals. Slow them down if they're putting themselves at risk by working too fast.

**Q. As a worker, what are some things I can do to keep myself safe?**

- A.** Listen to, and follow, the training on how to do your job safely. Always use equipment according to the manufacturer's instructions; don't vary from them for any reason. Remember that you have the right to refuse unsafe work. You also have a responsibility to report unsafe conditions to your supervisor, and that can include activities by your co-workers that can be hazardous to others.

**Q. How do I deal with confined spaces on my vineyard?**

- A.** An employer with confined spaces in the workplace must have a confined space program if workers enter them. All employers must ensure workers know where the confined spaces are. In vineyards, some examples are large hoppers, the press, and wine tanks. Make sure they're marked, and that workers understand the hazards they create. Workers should never enter a confined space unless they have the proper training and equipment to do so.

**Q. Where can I get more safety information?**

- A.** You'll find a library of free resources for orchards and vineyards at [worksafebc.com](http://worksafebc.com), including the *Health and Safety for Wineries and Vineyards* guide.

AgSafe provides free, on-site training for all B.C. agriculture workplaces, and offers publications, signs, and videos in a variety of languages at [agsafebc.ca](http://agsafebc.ca).

Looking for answers to your specific health and safety questions? Send them to us at [worksafemagazine@worksafebc.com](mailto:worksafemagazine@worksafebc.com), and we'll consider them for our next "Ask an officer" feature. ☺

**“Always use equipment according to the manufacturer's instructions; don't vary from them for any reason.”**

—Steven Marino, WorkSafeBC occupational safety officer

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