

As part of the Ministry of Labour's (MOL) continuing "Safe at Work Ontario" strategy, the Industrial Health and Safety Program and Health Care Unit will conduct a Blitz for one month starting on October 1, 2011 to address the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for worker protection.

Workers can suffer serious injuries or be killed when personal protective equipment is not used, not adequate for a job or it is not maintained properly. The purpose of this blitz is to protect workers and to prevent those tragedies. PPE is designed to protect against safety and/or health hazards. Hard hats, safety glasses, and safety boots, for instance, are designed to prevent or reduce the severity of injury if an accident occurs. Other PPE, such as hearing and respiratory protection, is designed to prevent illnesses and unwanted health effects.

It is important to remember that PPE only provides protection. It reduces the risk but does not eliminate the hazard.

Inspectors will visit selected industrial and health care workplaces across Ontario where personal protective equipment is required for worker protection.

In industrial workplaces, inspectors will focus on head, eye and foot protection.

#### ***ORFA Members and the recreation sector in general need to consider:***

- ***Head protection when working on ice and additional protection anytime there is a risk from above or falling/flying objects (i.e. changing light bulbs, working over your head with tools, items on an elevated platform that may fall);***
- ***Eye protection when pouring, connecting or disconnecting any fossil fuel, draining mechanical equipment, using small power tools or snow throwers, grass maintenance equipment or ice edging equipment;***
- ***Foot protection that adequately protects the ankle. Low cut running shoe styled safety footwear is not recommended.***

The MOL may also address other types of personal protective equipment, including fall, respiratory, skin

and hearing protection. In health care workplaces, inspectors will focus on head, eye, face, respiratory, hearing, hand and foot protective equipment for non-clinical staff.

#### ***ORFA Members and the recreation sector in general need to consider:***

- ***Fall protection when conducting pre-service checks of any HVAC systems on the roof or from other heights within the facility;***
- ***Respiratory equipment when conducting any work inside chemical or mechanical rooms;***
- ***Hearing protection when workers are exposed to noise 85-decimals or higher. Facilities are encouraged to conduct a noise level assessment collectively with the Joint Health and Safety Committee.***
- ***The role of the MSDS information in identifying PPE requirements in the workplace. Review WHMIS training with staff. As a test, ask yourself what chemicals have you used recently in the workplace and was PPE either required and/or used? Many workplace settings are relaxed when it gets to use of PPE. It may be best described as an equivalent of driving without a seat belt. It is okay until you get caught not having it on. The end result may include a ticket for non-compliance, or an ejection from the vehicle that may have a life altering consequence;***
- ***It is important to lead by example. Facility management needs to demonstrate to workers that everyone has a role in workplace safety. When entering any work area managers must also wear all of the required PPE.***
- ***Personal protective equipment should be the last resort in defence. Better alternatives lie in engineering controls that eliminate as much of the risk as possible. Consider what controls need to be in place.***

Workers in the industrial and health care sectors are required to wear personal protective equipment when they are at risk of:

- Eye injury due to possible flying particles, dust, vapours, chemicals or intense light sources, etc.

- Head injury due to possible falling or flying objects, fixed object blows or exposed energized electrical conductors, etc.
- Foot injury due to possible falling or rolling objects, sharp objects or exposed energized electrical conductors, etc.

*ORFA reminds its members and the recreation sector in general that all governing officials are in fact focused on making your operation a safer place to work and play – they should never be feared. All workers must be trained on how to properly receive and accommodate any governing authority. Further direction should be provided to workers on the protocols for workplace inspections by officials.*

MOL Inspectors will focus on the following key priorities:

- **Selection:** Inspectors will ensure employers’ and supervisors’ selection of personal protective equipment is appropriate for the hazard. They will check that the equipment is providing an appropriate level of protection for the worker. For example, inspectors may ask supervisors why a particular type of equipment is being used as opposed to other types.
- **Use:** Inspectors will check that employers and supervisors are instructing workers on the proper use of required personal protective equipment. They will also check that workers are using the required equipment.
- **Care:** Inspectors will check that employers and supervisors are properly maintaining the required personal protective equipment. Inspectors will check on the state of repair and will take enforcement action, as appropriate, in response to inadequate equipment.

*It is important to remember that that workers who have attended any industry related training session do not return to work completely trained. The ORFA strives to provide the most up to date information specific to the issues that affect our industry, as well as suggested industry best practices. Employers are reminded that all ORFA training must be supported with “Workplace Specific Training”. The above noted Blitz information outlines MOL expectations in this regard. The role of the ORFA is to support its members in creating competent workers as defined in the OHSA:*

“Competent person” means a person who,

- (a) is qualified because of knowledge, training and experience to organize the work and its performance,
- (b) is familiar with this Act and the regulations that apply to the work, and
- (c) has knowledge of any potential or actual danger to health or safety in the workplace; (“personne compétente”)

As with previous blitzes, inspectors have a variety of enforcement tools starting with compliance orders to reinforce the minimum requirements of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and the applicable regulations made under the OHSA. However, as you know, compliance with the minimum requirements under the OHSA is just a starting point. It is anticipated that employers will seek the assistance of the various Health and Safety Associations (HSAs) to develop and implement policies and programs that go beyond the minimum standard and introduce best practices. Inspectors will refer clients to the appropriate HSA for assistance, as needed, for the duration of the blitz.

*The ORFA focuses on helping employers meet (a) and (b) of the set competency definition. Employers must determine what additional in-house knowledge, training and experience each work requires, as well as what portions of the Act and or other Legislation must be shared specific to the workplace. As indicated below, the OHSA is just a starting point toward worker safety. The ORFA looks forward to working with its members and others in creating a safer industry.*

**Disclaimer**

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