

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS'
WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY INITIATIVE**

**YOUNG WORKER CONSULTATION SESSIONS
SUMMARY REPORT**

This report provides a high level overview of the discussions that took place at the Young Worker consultation sessions. A total of 36 participants took part in two sessions that were held on January 27, 2006.

Increasing Awareness

- In discussing whether harm is preventable, and what prevention steps could be taken, a number of ideas were generated, which included increased awareness of workplace hazards, workplace inspections, training programs, better management by employers, balancing production pressures with safety, better use of safety equipment, WorkSafeBC partnerships with other agencies, explanation by managers of the rationale behind instructions, and workers taking responsibility for their own safety and exercising their right to refuse unsafe work.
- There was concern expressed that not all injuries are reported, because of an attitude to not report the “small stuff”.
- There was discussion about the need to raise awareness about workplace hazards, and how to persuade people that harm is preventable and not an acceptable or inevitable cost of doing business. Ideas generated included training programs, regular joint committee meetings, new worker orientation programs, better explanation and management by employers, mentoring, regular audits and media campaigns.
- In many cases, training is inadequate for young workers. There is a need for better awareness about the consequences of injuries and disease, the right to refuse unsafe work, and the limits of job responsibility.
- A number of ideas were expressed about the best way to reach young workers with a health and safety message. This included personal experience stories, the education system, media campaigns, training programs, and increasing awareness of WorkSafeBC’s 1-800 tip line.
- Some participants had learned about workplace health and safety in high school or university, although feedback was mixed about the effectiveness of these programs. A number of participants also shared stories about training, or lack thereof, at their last job.

Changing Behaviour

- There was discussion about the various roles played by WorkSafeBC, employers, workers and supervisors in workplace safety.
- WorkSafeBC was noted for the important role it plays in making and enforcing the regulations. Supervisors and managers are important for their level of experience and responsibility for training, and also because they lead by example and set a tone for approachability.
- Opinion was expressed that employers should take more responsibility for documenting unsafe practices and reprimanding workers accordingly, and that workers need to take responsibility to follow safety procedures and avoid being hurt.
- There was discussion about work injuries in temporary and seasonal industries. Temporary agencies should take more responsibility in training workers because they have more consistent contact.
- The opinion of the group was split as to whether the charging of worker fines would be desirable. While some felt that worker fines could change behavior, concern was raised by others that it might deter reporting, create a fearful work environment, prevent employers from taking responsibility, and furthermore, that the levying of fines would assign blame in the no-fault system of workers' compensation. Others felt that fines might be appropriate if there was documentation of repeated safety offences, and where somebody else's safety was put at risk.

Emerging Trends

- A number of emerging trends affecting health and safety were discussed, such as the impact of multiculturalism, technology, different modes of communication, and non-traditional work hours.
- Suggestions made to address these trends included increased enforcement, focused attention on small employers and temporary employment agencies, standardization of safety procedures, improved communication, outreach to high school students, ergonomics, improved services by WorkSafeBC, and better enforcement of safe practices by employers.