

BACKGROUNDER

WHAT is the Partners Program?

The Partners in Injury and Disability Prevention Program, also referred to as the Partners Program, is a WorkSafeBC department that administers several levels of rebate to encourage employers to adopt management systems in occupational health and safety and in injury management/Return to Work (RTW).

Employers who implement a standardized health and safety program and/or an injury management/RTW system and meet the audit and qualifying requirements will receive a Certificate of Recognition (COR). With a health and safety COR, employers can earn a ten percent rebate of their WorkSafeBC premium. An additional five percent premium rebate may be awarded if the employer incorporates a injury management/return-to-work system and receives a RTW COR.

The objective of the Partners Program is to promote the concept of managing health and safety to an equal basis with other business components such as profitability and productivity.

HOW does the Partners Program work?

Employers voluntarily participate in COR through an industry association that has an agreement with WorkSafeBC to act as a certifying partner. In accordance with the program's standards and guidelines, the certifying partner will coordinate the maintenance and delivery of the COR program elements to the employer and assist the employer with successfully obtaining a COR.

Employers in the Partners Program will implement a health and safety management system, participate in appropriate training, and complete an initial audit of their management system(s). When the employer successfully meets the audit and program standards, the employer will receive a Certificate of Recognition from the certifying partner. The COR is valid for three years with a requirement for annual audits. Separate audits are required for those health and safety COR employers also enrolled in the RTW COR program.

WHO is setting the Standards and Guidelines?

WorkSafeBC has created the program's standards and guidelines in partnership with an advisory group made up of industry and WorkSafeBC representatives. These standards and guidelines are a living document providing the framework for the Partners Program as it expands and becomes available to all B.C. industries.

WHAT were the results of the Partners Program pilots?

From 2002 to 2005, three pilot programs each with its own certifying partner were established. The first pilot was with the BC Road Construction and Maintenance Safety Network in the construction industry with the Construction Safety Network serving as certifying partner. The second, for the oil and gas industry, has Enform (previously known as the Petroleum Industry Training Service) as certifying partner. The third pilot further expanded the construction industry program through the Construction Safety Association of BC.

By the end of 2005, hundreds of employers had achieved COR certification and WorkSafeBC rebated several hundreds of thousands of dollars to them. In the construction industry, approximately 190 employers achieved or maintained COR certification in 2005, and these employers received incentive rebates totaling approximately \$1,500,000. In the oil and gas industry, of the approximately 220 employers participating in Enform's COR program, 109 employers earned rebates totaling approximately \$346,000.

Over the next few years, injury and claim performance data will become available for analysis — this data will be the key element to evaluate the success of the B.C. program. In Alberta, where the Partnerships in Health and Safety program has been operating for a number of years, the claims cost ratio was 23% lower in 2005 among employers registered in COR programs versus those employers outside the program. Similar results are expected for the B.C. program.

HOW will the program expand into all B.C. industries?

In 2006, the WorkSafeBC Board of Directors formally approved expanding the Partners Program from its pilot phase to a program available to all industries in B.C. By fall 2006, the BC Forest Safety Council became the fourth certifying partner, and there has been a significant increase in interest within various industries to form formal industry safety associations. Additional partnerships with industry safety associations will result in certifying partners in other industry sectors.

Employers wishing to participate in the Partners Program should contact their industry safety association to confirm if their industry has a certifying partner — and if one is not available, to determine how to establish one. Employers may contact WorkSafeBC to confirm what infrastructure is currently available to establish a Certificate of Recognition program in their industry.