



November 5, 2010

Province increases actions to keep Albertans safe and healthy

New plan increases inspections, tackles occupational diseases and motor vehicle injuries, and formalizes family involvement in court sentencing

Edmonton... With four items on the 10-point occupational health and safety plan completed, the Alberta government is adding four new initiatives to help keep working Albertans safe and healthy.

“Work-related diseases and vehicle incidents are killing more workers than injuries are,” said Employment and Immigration Minister Thomas Lukaszuk. “It is time we took steps to reduce these work-related fatalities.”

The new initiatives are:

- Identifying new ways to reduce work-related motor vehicle incidents - a new best practices guide and e-learning program, *Driving for Work: Developing Safe Practices for Employers and Workers*, will help employers develop effective safe driving programs for their employees.
- Identifying new ways to reduce work-related diseases - Lukaszuk has instructed Employment and Immigration to establish an occupational disease prevention program.
- Formalizing the process to ensure that family input is sought on each and every occasion that involves a creative sentence.
- Making the enforcement system even stronger - hiring an additional eight Occupational Health and Safety Officers will bring the total to 102 and will result in a stronger presence on Alberta worksites.

Lukaszuk launched a 10-point plan for Occupational Health and Safety in July. He confirmed that as of November 8, four items from that list will have been completed. These include a stronger compliance system, a template for employer records, a website with records of companies and a review of the Work Safe Alberta initiative. On November 8, Lukaszuk will be hosting a forum with a number of industry and labour stakeholders, the first since 2005. The remaining six items are still underway.

-30-

Background: Occupational health and safety initiatives

Media inquiries may be directed to:

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Occupational health and safety initiatives

The original 10-point plan included:

1. Implementing updated compliance and enforcement procedures - implemented July 30 and October 8.
2. Unveiling an easy-to-understand online template for posting safety records - posted August 30.
3. Posting the safety records of all Alberta companies online - posted September 30.
4. Reviewing the direction of Work Safe Alberta - to be reviewed at a November 8 forum.
5. Launching an internal software program improving data collection and reporting systems - ongoing.
6. Revising the "Employer Review Process" for companies with Certificates of Recognition and poor safety performance - ongoing.
7. Discontinuing Best Safety Performer Awards and reviewing awards programs - ongoing.
8. Hiring eight additional Occupational Health and Safety Officers - ongoing.
9. Reviewing all open orders identified by the Office of the Auditor General - ongoing.
10. Introducing a pilot project for weekend and evening worksite inspections - ongoing.

Four of these have been completed and four new initiatives are being added to the plan.

1. Reducing the death toll on Alberta roads

- A new best practice guide has been developed by the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research, Alberta Transportation, Alberta Employment and Immigration, the Alberta Motor Association, and the Alberta Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association.
- The best practice, *Driving for Work: Developing Safe Practices for Employers and Workers*, includes a handbook for employers and workers to use to develop their own safe driving policies and programs as well as an online course available at: www.worksafe.alberta.ca/roadsafety.
- Motor vehicle incidents took the lives of 370 Alberta workers between 2000 and 2009, which is 28.8 per cent of the total work related fatalities in this period.

2. Increasing government commitment to prevent occupational diseases

- In order to prevent occupational disease and fatalities in the future from exposures that are occurring today, Lukaszuk has instructed Employment and Immigration to establish an occupational disease prevention program.
- Occupational diseases took the lives of 499 Alberta workers between 2000 and 2009, which is 38.8 per cent of the total work related fatalities in this period.
- These fatalities are increasing (reaching 44.5 per cent of all such deaths in 2009) and most result from exposures that occurred 20 - 30 years ago. More people die in Alberta each year from occupational disease than from injuries.
- Occupational disease fatalities result mostly from diseases such as asbestosis and coal workers' pneumoconiosis.

3. Formalizing the process to ensure that family input is sought on each and every occasion that involves a creative sentence.

- Families are consulted about potential ways to use the money from court convictions to promote occupational health and safety initiatives.
- Almost six million dollars in creative sentences have been levied by the courts. The funds have supported safety training programs, the development of best practices materials, charitable groups, and other endeavours.

4. Hiring another eight Occupational Health and Safety Officers

- Two of the new officers will be specialized technical advisors and six will be generalists.
- The new officers are in addition to the eight new hires announced earlier this year which will bring the total in Alberta to 102 officers.
- OHS Officers are responsible for ensuring employers comply with minimum legislated standards at their worksites.
- Officers conduct investigations of incidents, assessments of complaints, assessments of the health and safety programs in place at worksites, general inspections, and provide information and advice to employers about minimum legislated standards.

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