
OH&S INFO LINE

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Twelve Years in Print:

Purcell Enterprises wants your opinion!

Well, it has been twelve years of publishing this newsletter first in the mail out form and then in the electronic form. I also have over 40 articles on file from my activities writing for this publication, Worksite News, and Corporate Training Monthly. I am thinking of compiling them into a collection ranging from creating incentives that work to dealing effectively with performance issues arising from Drug and Alcohol abuse. Let me know your burning OH&S issues so I can address them. Drop me a line at:

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The Special Needs of Immigrant Workers

By Barbara Semeniuk

The workplaces in Canada are changing with the arrival of new immigrants into the Country. Much of the growth of the labour force in Canada is due to immigration. Canada ranks third in projected net immigration numbers according to the United Nations between 2005 and 2050 behind only the U.S and Germany. Many of these workers in Alberta and other parts of Canada are temporary foreign workers who often work in small workplaces, physically demanding, non unionized jobs.

The numbers of immigrants coming to Canada specifically for work increased almost 48% between 1993 and 2005, from 105, 662 people in 1993 to 156, 310 in 2005. Skilled workers now comprise almost 60% of new permanent residents in Canada, up from 41% in 1993. Many immigrants who have earned their highest educational degree from outside of Canada are more likely to be employed in unskilled jobs that are often physically demanding. In fact, 40% of recent immigrants to Canada are overqualified for their work. As well, many immigrants whose first language is not English often work in unskilled, physically demanding work as well.

Temporary workers on visas for work in Canada often undergo steep competition in their country for work and are often very grateful to be working in Canada. They may be very reluctant to refuse unsafe work and rock the boat by making demands like enhanced safety at the workplace. They may require that safe work practices and procedures, training, hazard assessments, incident investigations for example be in their main working language along with safety slogans and/or signs. Employers must be prepared to ensure that their workers are competent to perform their work and make these provisions.

As well, in WHMIS, the Material Safety Data Sheets need to be in the main working language of the workplace and, if, for example, this is Spanish: then they must be translated into Spanish so workers are able to protect themselves on the job. Many employers are unaware of this requirement.

The Institute for Work and Health (IWH) conducted studies on immigrant workers in Canada and found, in general, that the proportion of injuries requiring medical attention was higher among the most recent immigrants to Canada. As well, male immigrant workers who were in Canada for five years or less were twice as likely to suffer a work related injury requiring medical attention than Canadian borne workers.

90% of all work related injuries suffered by recent immigrants required medical attention compared to 65% for Canada-born workers. An interesting fact, however, was that those immigrants that had been in Canada for six to ten years had an injury rate that was lower than for Canadian borne workers. This may be due to experience. The reasons recent immigrants may have a higher injury rate may be the fact they are likely to work in more hazardous occupations. As well, due to the financial strain and stress associated with resettlement, they may be less likely to report unsafe work and or request training which may exacerbate their risk of injury.

Immigrant Workers have special needs and proactive employers respond to them: one Mushroom farm has over 30 different nationalities and safety signs are pictograms which are universal in nature and transcend the language barrier. Safety information is available at this workplace in five different main working languages.

Resources from other provinces are often solicited by employers because, for example, Worksafe BC has general information and online resources for employers and workers in Punjabi, traditional Chinese and simplified Chinese. These include information on how to report injuries, start a claim and register a business and links to translated OHS articles and publications. WorkSafe BC plans to add information in Spanish, Vietnamese, French and Korean to its website based on the frequency of requests it receives in these languages.

Training for English as a Second Language often includes asking lots of questions, demonstrating with concrete examples like show and tell, and the use of pictures and/or information delivered in the main working languages of the Workplace. Employers must be aware of the changing face of Canadian workplaces and embrace the opportunities and rewards of employing a diverse and multicultural workforce. Canada often attracts the best to its shores: giving us a global competitive advantage. Immigrants do have special needs....but by meeting these needs the benefits are many!

How to Effectively Transfer Knowledge in a Health and Safety Training Session

By Barbara Semeniuk

Much safety training is simply an information dump: trainers sometimes feel that the more information they present, the better the training session. Others will adhere to regulations to drive what they teach because these classes are an easy sell. Throughout it all the overriding concern is happy participants in a well attended class who rate the instructor as good to excellent. Participants are expected to demonstrate their commitment to the learning they have received by applying it on their own time under their own steam. There is no way of checking to determine if participants actually do this in most Health and Safety classes.

A radical concept: these are all myths and failures in the classroom environment to facilitate effective transfer of knowledge from the instructor to the class. Instructors should have a well designed course where simplicity and retention techniques presented in a variety of ways cement learning. A well designed course is a joy to teach where the trainer facilitates learning and the participants learn by doing. This process must be broad enough to encompass how participants learn: hearing, seeing, doing and teaching their knowledge to someone else, such as the rest of the class. This can be made into a fun and informative process by introducing elements like rolling a dice for the length of a break, tossing balls to participants in groups who select the next group to lead the class in what they have discovered. Everybody participates in a fun, comfortable, and safe environment.

Effective training classes have to be directed: there should not be a huge range of skill levels in the class. An engineer at one end of the class....someone functionally illiterate in the other. You will lose one or the other and neither will be comfortable in such an environment. Students have to be selected to be present at their skill level in a class....or learning will not be effective.

Management or the student's boss should set expectations for the class and demonstrate their commitment to the process by meeting with each student prior to the learning experience and set goals and expectations based on the course content. They will make it known that the student shall be graded on a performance evaluation after the training class to determine if the skills have transferred. What gets measured - gets done.

The instructor and the students both participate in the learning process and they learn in the most realistic

and systematic fashion to arrive at this destination. Gap analysis by a team of workers and management can assist this process as well. For example this team may determine that:

Middle management is uncertain of their roles and responsibilities in a Health and Safety management system.

Location management may not have built a strong relationship with the trainer to allow for shared safety expectations and goal setting. Decisions are not done in a collaborative fashion.

Workers express frustration with the perceived level of resources allocated towards Health and Safety: some of the rules did not make sense at their location and environment as well.

The training session needs to set clear performance expectations: do people know what they are supposed to do and can they do it?

Is the necessary support in place at this company....do they have what they need to do what they are supposed to do?

Are they measured on their performance and are their consequences for good and/or bad performance?

Feedback: do people know what they're doing what they're supposed to do?

Capability: Can they perform the task or can't they....even as Mager says in his book Performance objectives....if a gun was held to their head. (You can never punish someone for a lack of knowledge or skill in the latter case).

Do they know what they need to know in order to do what they are expected to do?

These performance factors are adapted from Rummler and Brache's research on performance factor by the Hile group. If the answer to any of these questions is: "No" or "Don't know" there is a gap in performance. When performance gaps occur you have an opportunity for improvement or in a less politically correct fashion "a failure" in the management system or a barrier to transfer of knowledge.

Management, trainers, and participants need to be honest about these barriers and devise methods to surmount them...hence the training session. These sessions need to be reality based dealing with the actual challenges faced by participants on their job...the training session is customized to their needs and requirements in a collaborative, participatory manner.

Upfront work must be done by all parties before the training session develops: participants must be carefully selected so their skill levels are not too different, they should meet with their boss one on one prior to the learning situation and must be fully aware of the barriers to success. All parties have to devise strategies to surmount them and the trainer must engage the learners in a safe, fun, informative session with good adult learning techniques applied that address the three main different learning styles: hearing, seeing, and doing (kinesthetic).

Participants should network amongst themselves, and perhaps may develop lasting friendships from people they have met in the class. They should actively coach members of the class because the tell show do teach cycle of learning is very powerful. After the training session: there should be a debriefing by the boss....no happy sheets grading the niceness of the trainers delivery or how happy the participants were in class. What key concepts did they come away with that they are going to apply immediately, within 30 days, within six months, within a year? Management should conduct performance appraisals at these intervals to see if the learning stuck. The persons' immediate superior (supervisor) can play an important role in the transfer of knowledge as well and should be held accountable for his/her staff. Special training sessions just for Supervisors to facilitate this process may be in order as well. Barriers to learning such as a lack of the new equipment should be taken into account and addressed so the participants can maintain their knowledge during the course of their day to day activities and not forget it. Quizzes, group sessions with some of the new machines are some of the ways to overcome this barrier.

Focus on what the group need s to do once the learning session wraps up rather than what they now know. Build to do lists in the class session and have the management team evaluate how well these to do lists are executed by conducting performance reviews at clearly defined intervals. In this manner, information from the class will be disseminated and skills will be learned and barriers to success overcome!

Barbara Semeniuk is President of Purcell Enterprises Ltd. a consulting company that strives to deliver "more" to the client and push the envelope always. Check out my website at www.purcellenterprises.ca or call me at 780-951-0867.

Changes to the Partners in Injury Reduction Program for 2009!

By Barbara Semeniuk

Maybe I should be riding a great white horse screaming, "The changes are coming! The changes are coming!" as I ride. Anyways, this is not Philadelphia, but Edmonton.

Some of you may be wondering what the Partners in Injury Reduction Program is anyways. This program offers premium rate discounts to employers who have successfully implemented health, safety, and disability management programs and have achieved the Certificate of Recognition (COR) standards set by Alberta Employment Immigration and Industry (AEII) and their certifying partners. The program is successful as it has contributed to a reduction in the number of injuries and claims costs associated with injuries through the combined efforts of employers, AEII, certifying partners and the WCB. In fact, even with the increased employment the last few years, the injury rate in effect declined due to more participation in the program. The biggest change is the new audit instrument in 2009. I will give a brief synopsis at the, yes, the bottom of this document.

As of 2005, first year Certificate of Recognition (COR) holders will receive a minimum 10% rebate for the first year of the program. The reasoning behind this course of action is to increase the financial carrot so employers will bite and participate more in the program. It is hoped that offering a 10% instead of a 5% rebate of premiums paid to first-time COR holders, as a minimum return on investment, will increase employer commitment and participation in the program.

The PIR rebate will be paid in the year that the COR is achieved. Rebates are currently paid out in May of the following year that the Company achieved their COR. The payment date will be amended for first time COR holders to the date that notice is received that they have obtained their COR. This means that payment will be received sooner, that offsets their initial investment in safety.

Employers can still qualify for up to 20% in a PIR refund. The company can earn a 10% rebate for achieving COR but are also eligible for two other measures in PIR: Improving Your Performance and Maintaining Industry Leadership. Achieving on these measures can mean that a Company can receive up to 20% in the form of a PIR refund.

What happens after the first year when I receive my 10% discount? After the first year, in year two of the

program, the incentive for maintaining COR reverts to a 5% discount, but participants can still earn up to a maximum rebate of 20% for industry leadership or improved performance.

Do I have to register in the year before I want to participate in the program and/or receive my COR?

No, once employers achieve their COR, they become eligible for a rebate in the year they earned it. They must still register in PIR, but the registration is effective at the time of earning a COR.

Oh yes, I brief synopsis: the audit is changing in 2009. There will be a driving portion in effect to recognize the fact you are four times more likely to die in a traffic accident than a workplace injury. As well, the hazard assessment portion of the audit document will be changing: you must list all your tasks, the health and safety hazards in each task, and have job descriptions for each task. All auditors in Alberta must use the new audit instrument by July 1, 2009.

These changes are not widely known. These are effective for the 2009 PIR program year. Hopefully, they will increase employer participation in a program that is gaining notice across North America and the world.....because it works....it saves lives...the best benefit of all!

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Webnotes:

Researchers at the University of New Brunswick have developed a user-friendly website to help employers and workers tackle workplace bullying. The website is at www.unbf.ca/towardarespectfulworkplace

The site has tools for employers and workers to implement violence prevention training, how to recognize and combat workplace bullying and poisonous workplaces.

A quote from one peg leg Sal:

ARRRR! Avast me hearties! Have a Safe, Prosperous, Healthy, and Fun New Year ...or hear my parrot sing (sotto) voice old lang syne...20 times...backwards...see if you get any satanic messages.....like...

Happy New Year 2009
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