
Blitz To Focus On Hazardous Chemicals In Workplaces

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Ministry of Labour occupational health and safety inspectors will check for hazards involving exposure to caustic, noxious or allergenic substances in industrial and health care workplaces during an enforcement blitz in September 2009.

During the ten years from 1999 to 2008, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board recorded 23,789 chemical-related workplace injuries and incidents of occupational illness.

The increased enforcement is part of the province's [Safe At Work Ontario](#) strategy, launched in June 2008.

BLITZ FOCUS

Many of Ontario's more than 400 occupational health and safety inspectors will focus on hazardous chemicals used in all workplaces, with emphasis on:

Swimming pools and spas

- disinfecting chemicals such as chlorine, sodium hypochlorite and calcium hypochlorite

Dry cleaners

- perchloroethylene
- hydrocarbon solvents

Metal fabrication shops

- metalworking fluids

Health care workplaces (hospitals, long-term care facilities and retirement homes)

- chemicals used for cleaning by housekeeping staff
- cleaning and disinfecting chemicals (e.g., halogenated compounds)
- detergents used for therapeutic pools and in laundries

Inspectors will focus on the adequacy of training and education of workers who may be exposed to chemicals that may endanger their safety or health. They will also check on the availability of personal protective equipment such as goggles, gloves and boots. Spill control plans and other emergency procedures will also be reviewed.

Inspectors will take enforcement action as appropriate to any contraventions of the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) (OHSA) and its regulations.

For each conviction of a contravention, a court can impose a fine of up to \$500,000 against a corporation convicted under OHSA. Individuals can face a fine of up to \$25,000 or imprisonment of up to 12 months, or both.

SAFE AT WORK ONTARIO

Sector and hazard specific inspection blitzes are an important feature of the [Safe At Work Ontario](#) strategy. There is no acceptable rate of injury in Ontario workplaces.

That's why *Safe At Work Ontario* seeks to:

- improve workplace health and safety culture
- reduce workplace injuries and illness
- reduce the burden on the health care system
- avoid costs for employers and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, and
- provide a level playing field for compliant companies.

Safe At Work Ontario builds on the success of the Ministry of Labour four-year compliance program which ran until March 31, 2008. By the fourth year, this program had helped to reduce the annual rate of workplace injury by 20 per cent.

Because of the decline in the annual rate of lost-time injuries, employers have avoided about \$5 billion in direct and indirect costs during the four years ending March 31, 2008. About 50,000 injuries were prevented. Prevention of injuries helps to ease the strain on the province's health care system and enhance workplace productivity.

Susan McConnell, Minister's Office, 416-326-7710
Bruce Skeaff, Communications Branch, 416-326-7405

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