

# NETWORK

## News

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AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIAL SECTOR



**FORMERLY FARMSAFE  
NEWSLETTER**

## New farm safety plan: customized for Ontario



Ontario farmers will soon have access to a new management tool that will guide them through developing, implementing and establishing a customized farm safety plan. Announced late last month at the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) annual conference, the new Ontario FarmSafe plan will be an Ontario-specific version of CASA's new national plan.

To be available in early 2012, Ontario FarmSafe will help farmers develop a comprehensive health and safety program that responds to the specific hazards in their operations. For example, information, tools and templates included in Ontario FarmSafe will help farm operators compose a general policy statement for health and safety, identify and control hazards, including documenting standard work procedures, outlining emergency actions, conducting training, and investigating incidents.

Dean Anderson, a regional director of Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) and the recently re-appointed chair of CASA, describes the plan as an important new program that will be useful to farmers no matter the size, location or type of their operation. "For many farmers, it's not a question of whether or not they want to work safely. It's a matter of accessing the information they need. This plan is a key solution."

A primary difference between the national and Ontario-specific plan is the addition of Ontario legislation and regulations. "Even though farms without paid employees are not required to comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act," says Anderson, "the legislation and regu-

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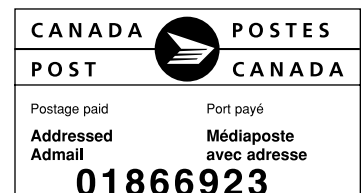
*HSO Network News: Agricultural Industrial Sector* is the next generation of Farmsafe newsletter, published by Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS).

WSPS provides industry-specific health and safety products, training and consulting services to 154,000 businesses and 3.8 million employees in Ontario's agricultural, manufacturing and service sectors. Previously you knew us as Farm Safety Association, Industrial Accident Prevention Association and Ontario Service Safety Alliance. WSPS is committed to putting health and safety solutions within reach of every employee and employer in the province and we believe in building partnerships to help us deliver on that promise.

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*HSO Network News: Agricultural Industrial Sector* is also available online at [www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/WSPS/Newsletters.aspx](http://www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/WSPS/Newsletters.aspx). Share this newsletter with friends and colleagues by downloading and printing, or emailing them this link.



## New farm safety plan: customized for Ontario

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lations under it can serve as a useful minimum performance standard for everyone.

“The plan will be particularly helpful for farms with few formal health and safety rules in place. When you’re done, you’ll have policies and procedures, you’ll have conducted a hazard assessment and built a plan to eliminate or control those hazards, and you’ll have an employee handbook ready to share with workers.”

Anderson describes the plan as “a comparatively inexpensive business risk management tool, just like crop insurance or an animal health plan. It will help you protect your workers and improve the performance of your operations.”

Although the plan will take farmers step by step through the process of developing and implementing a plan, WSPS will be ready with additional support as needed. “Among our offerings,” says Anderson, “the plan will feature largely in a half-day workshop that we plan to deliver in multiple locations across the province. As well, WSPS consultants will be available for advice and input at any stage of the process.”

“We’re committed to putting health and safety solutions within reach of every employer and employee in Ontario,” says Elizabeth Mills, president and CEO of WSPS. “Working with CASA to offer Ontario FarmSafe is an important step toward delivering on that promise for our agriculture clients.”

Just how many farmers don’t have a plan was made evident in a recent Farm Credit Canada (FCC) safety survey. A key finding in the national survey was that less than 1 in 10 farms (9%) have a written agricultural safety plan.

*Watch for details on WSPS’s Ontario FarmSafe offerings in the next issue of HSO Network News: Agricultural Industrial Sector. For more on the survey, see “Farm safety survey: ‘we want more training’” on page 5. ■*

## Confined space 1: oxygen limiting silos

The recent release of a Ministry of Labour alert serves as a reminder of hazards associated with oxygen limited silos.

The release results from a 2010 fatality at a farm in Eastern Ontario. The worker was 51 and a grandfather of three. In media reports, the farm owner speculated that the worker may have been trying to do “that little bit extra” in the workplace. “He was a super, super nice guy.”

### The incident

*HSO Network News* spoke with Doug McBride, an acting district manager with the ministry, about what happened. McBride explained that the silo had been filled with high moisture shelled corn on a Thursday. From the top of the silo, the worker and the owner noticed that breather bags were buried under the feed, and that a vent tube from a bag had detached. “The bags act much like lungs,” explains McBride, “so that as air temperature and pressure inside the silo increase, the breather bags offset the pressure.

The two men couldn’t get at the bags or the detached tube because of the height of the corn feed. “Deciding that some of the feed corn would have to be used up before they could put together a repair plan,” says McBride, “they closed the hatch and went on to do other things.”

Four days later, the owner left the farm to run some errands. “When the owner returned, neither he nor another farmhand could find the worker. During a search, they noticed the silo hatch was open and found the worker, collapsed, in the silo. Emergency services pronounced the worker dead at the scene.”

### The hazard

The potential hazards inside a silo are very real. In this situation, they include high levels of carbon dioxide and nitrogen dioxide, and extremely low levels of oxygen. “This is typical of any oxygen-limiting silo,” says McBride. “It’s a sealed

building designed to store feed for long periods of time without spoilage. The feed begins to ferment almost immediately, which depletes the oxygen and preserves the feed.”

Oxygen content will fall from a normal atmospheric content of 20.9% to as low as 1%. Furthermore, other hazardous gases such as carbon dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, and methane may be present.

The ministry alert recommends

- avoiding entry into oxygen-limited structures by performing tasks from the outside where possible
- entering only when absolutely necessary
- prohibiting unplanned or inadvertent entries into these types of silos

Silos are just one example of potentially dangerous confined spaces on a farm. Others include grain bins, manure pits and spreaders, mixing or holding tanks, cisterns, valve pits and pump houses. Anyone who enters a confined space and attempts a rescue in an emergency could quickly be overcome by a hazardous atmosphere.

### How we can help

- Read the full alert online: [www.farmsafety.ca/public/pages/whats\\_new.html](http://www.farmsafety.ca/public/pages/whats_new.html) *Aussi disponible en français.*
- Review the MOL’s health and safety guidelines for farming operations, hazardous atmospheres and confined spaces: [www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/farming/gl\\_atmospheres.php](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/farming/gl_atmospheres.php)
- Download the fact sheets *Silo Gas Dangers* and *Farm Accident Rescue*, plus *Silo Gas Safety*, 1 of 75 agriculture safety topics, from [www.farmsafety.ca/public/pages/factsheets\\_english.html](http://www.farmsafety.ca/public/pages/factsheets_english.html)
- Protect your workplace from the hazards of confined spaces. WSPS offers classroom, on-site and e-learning courses. Our consultants can also help you establish a confined space policy and program. Call 905-614-1400 or 1-800-494-9777, or visit [www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/WSPS/cp2/Confined-Space.aspx](http://www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/WSPS/cp2/Confined-Space.aspx) ■

# MSDs: first MOL blitz of 2012

In February, the Ministry of Labour will conduct a month-long inspection blitz on musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). This MSD blitz, the ministry's third, will concentrate on manual material handling. Although the agriculture sector is not high on the industry's priorities for this blitz, inspectors visiting any workplace will be on the lookout for MSD hazards regardless of industry sector.

MSDs are a primary source of injuries in every sector where manual material handling and repetitive movement occur. By taking steps to prevent MSDs, you can better protect your workers from painful and often debilitating injuries.

MSDs are injuries of the muscles, nerves, tendons, ligaments, joints, cartilage, or spinal discs. They result from forceful exertion, awkward body positions, hand-arm and whole-body vibration, contact stress, and repetitive tasks. MSDs often take time to develop and can lead to chronic back pain, shoulder problems, carpal tunnel syndrome, etc.

In Ontario, 2009 claims statistics show that MSDs accounted for 44% of all lost-time claims and 41% of all lost-time claim costs. This translated into 913,000 days lost and 28,000 compensation claims worth \$112 million. These injuries cost companies money, and cost workers pain and suffering.

## MSDs in agriculture

The table (right) indicates sample activities in specific agricultural sectors that could pose MSD hazards, and the parts of the body at greatest risk of injury. The table is not intended to be inclusive.

## Implementing MSD controls

Reducing the risk of MSDs in your workplace involves recognizing, assessing and controlling the hazards. These controls should be specific to the type of work performed. Here are a few suggestions:

- Early in the design phase of a new process or task, apply ergonomic principles, e.g., reducing repetitive

movements, forceful movements, and fixed or awkward positioning.

- Provide material handling equipment, such as carts, dollies, pallet jacks or forklifts, and ensure workers receive appropriate training.
- Train workers on proper lifting techniques.
- Implement safer handling alternatives. For example:
  - avoid lifting loads from ground level by storing objects above standing knuckle height and below standing shoulder height, or using lifting devices
  - avoid working at ground level, which usually requires kneeling and bending forward. Where possible, use a workbench to raise the work height
  - minimize work above the shoulders, or alternate with other tasks. Shoulder and arm muscles tire more quickly than back and leg muscles
- Encourage more trips with lighter loads.
- Introduce an exercise program. It can help prevent MSDs and promote overall health.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of these controls once they have been implemented, and adjust as indicated.

## How we can help

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services offers

- **MSD-related courses** in classroom,

self-study and e-learning formats: [www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/WSPS/Training/Musculoskeletal-Disorders.aspx](http://www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/WSPS/Training/Musculoskeletal-Disorders.aspx)

- **Downloads**, including these titles and more:
  - Musculoskeletal Disorder Prevention Series (guideline, resource manual and toolbox), [www.iapa.ca/main/resources/additional\\_downloads.aspx](http://www.iapa.ca/main/resources/additional_downloads.aspx)
  - Preventing Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDS), [www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/Resources/Downloads/WSPS/Preventing-Musculoskeletal-Disorders-\(MSDS\).aspx](http://www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/Resources/Downloads/WSPS/Preventing-Musculoskeletal-Disorders-(MSDS).aspx)
  - MSD Risk Assessment, [www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/Resources/Downloads/WSPS/MSD-Risk-Assessment.aspx](http://www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/Resources/Downloads/WSPS/MSD-Risk-Assessment.aspx)
- **Consulting services.** Our ergonomic specialists and consultants work with you and your staff to identify the most effective MSD prevention solutions, including:
  - ergonomics assessments
  - implementing MSD prevention programs
  - training for ergonomics change teams
  - job task and physical demands analyses
  - safety talks, including back care, general ergonomics awareness, industrial ergonomics and office ergonomics ■

Agricultural Sector	Activity	Body Parts
Livestock	Material handling: carrying hay and straw bales, bags of feed, bags of shavings, e.g., lifting, bending	Shoulder, back, hip, knee
	Mucking out stalls, e.g., lifting, bending, twisting, pushing and pulling wheelbarrows	Shoulder, elbow, back
	Operating equipment and tools, e.g., vibration, gripping	All
Horticultural	Greenhouses: hanging baskets, placing pots, winding vines, watering plants, manually reeling hoses in and out	Shoulder, elbow, wrist
	Nurseries: placing trees and plants, pruning trees and plants	Shoulder, back, elbow, wrist,
	Fruits and vegetables; orchards and vineyards: harvesting, reaching overhead, pruning trees and vines, e.g., reaching, bending, gripping	Shoulder, elbow, wrist, back
Landscaping	Material handling and construction: moving material, building, planting, e.g., lifting, bending, pushing, pulling, reaching	Shoulder, elbow, wrist, back, hip, knee
	Operating equipment and tools, e.g., vibration, gripping	All

# WSPS in the community: FARM VISITS



L-R: Morley Trask, Walter Grose, Sandy Miller, Elizabeth Mills

Photographer: Sharon Grose

Earlier this year, Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) president and CEO Elizabeth Mills visited three agricultural operations at the invitation of farm safety volunteer Walter Grose. “I wanted to offer Elizabeth some on-the-ground insights into some of the safety challenges facing farmers, and our work with them as volunteers,” says Walter.

Walter is a member of WSPS’s Rural Volunteer Advisory Group, secretary of the Wellington County Farm and Home Safety Association, and owner of Husky Farm Equipment in Alma, Ontario.

“On this visit,” recounts Elizabeth “I was able to go and observe three farm systems, each of which had additional lines of business including high tech and industrial components. The breadth of their operations opened my eyes to the challenges they face.”

“I was also very interested in talking with Walter and his wife Sharon about all of the information they must stay abreast of beyond health and safety, including the market, weather forecast, etc., and where they go to get the information they need. This is important information for us as we consider the partnerships we’re building to extend our reach within the industry. It also underlined for me the importance of the role we can play in making it easier for

farmers to stay healthy and safe.”

On-site visits are a priority for Elizabeth in all three of WSPS’s industrial sectors: agriculture, manufacturing and services. “When I’m back at WSPS, I draw on what I’ve learned during these visits and the experience of our customers when we are discussing business challenges and making decisions.”

## On the road

The first stop was Husky Farm Equipment. “We manufacture manure-handling equipment for the farmers,” notes Walter. “I showed Elizabeth our machines and reviewed our health and safety policy and practices.” In principle and practice, Walter and his staff operate in full compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Second stop: a mixed dairy farm managed by Glen Lichty and his family. “Glen grows grain, dairy cows, pigs, and chickens,” says Walter. “He also has his own shop for manufacturing and repairing equipment and tools. Glen makes almost everything he needs for the farm. And his neighbours come to him to get things made.”

Glen and many other farmers who look after their mechanical needs use a range of manufacturing machinery and tools, such as grinders, drill presses and welding equipment. However, Glen’s operation does not fall under the Occupational

Health and Safety Act because Glen has no paid employees.

Third stop: a dairy farm managed by Morley Trask, which has paid employees. “We toured Morley’s wood shop, apple orchard and facilities for making maple syrup, including an evaporator and a cooler for storing the syrup and apples. Under the act, they’re required to have procedures for the syrup, the apples, the shop tools, the grain wagons, corn drivers... Also, their hired man has to be trained on many, many things.”

One of the challenges all farming operations face, says Walter, is that “when you need to do a job, you get the job done. If it’s going to start raining, you take two bales instead of one. It’s what we deal with. Some people realize they may not be doing the right thing, but others don’t. Our job – the volunteers and WSPS – is to help them understand why it’s important to do it right, and provide them with the safety information and tools they need.”

## NEXT STEPS

Elizabeth looks forward to learning more from and working with volunteers and farm operators. Her most recent opportunity came earlier this month, when Elizabeth attended an event hosted by Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services (FARMS): 2011 Canada-Caribbean National Review Meeting, Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program.

“As we move forward,” says Elizabeth, “we need to communicate more and in a manner that meets the needs of the industry. We’re working closely with partners and committees to anticipate and plan for future health and safety needs, including OMAFRA, CASA, Landscape Ontario, and our Agriculture Advisory Committee and Rural Volunteer Advisory Council. What this means for the future is new solutions and opportunities, such as agriculture sector days of workshops and a Safety Group for the industry.”

*Watch for more on new solutions and opportunities in upcoming issues.* ■

# Farm safety survey: ‘we want more training’

Almost 9 in 10 respondents to a new national farm safety survey say they would be interested in pursuing training in at least one safety topic. The survey was conducted by Farm Credit Canada (FCC).

“Farmers certainly have good intentions for keeping safe on the farm, according to our research,” says Rémi Lemoine, FCC executive vice-president and COO, “Now what’s needed is concrete action.”

Lemoine’s remarks highlight two key findings: 85% of respondents believe safety is a priority on their farm, yet less than 1 in 10 (9%) have a written safety plan for their farm. Furthermore, less than 1 in 4 (24%) report having tried to access safety resources in the past year.

Researchers attribute these findings in part to old habits.

This doesn’t come as a surprise to Dean Anderson, a regional director for WSPS and the recently re-elected chair of CASA. “Many farmers have worked around farm equipment all their lives,” he says. “For example, a piece of unguarded equipment that has always been there. This can lead to unsafe beliefs, such as ‘I must be working safely because I’ve never been caught in it.’ It’s a real challenge to dislodge these false perceptions because they see no reason to do so, other than statistics on injuries sustained by others. And this can just reinforce another false perception that ‘It’s my neighbours who don’t work safely, not me.’”

Despite the disparity between intention and action, not all findings were discouraging. For example:

- 9 in 10 (91%) say they regularly take precautions for children
- 1 in 3 (35%) are interested in taking training on farm safety for children

For more on the survey results, see “Practicing Safety Measures.” For an executive summary of the survey, visit [www.fccvision.ca/InAction.aspx](http://www.fccvision.ca/InAction.aspx) ■

## Practicing Safety Measures

Survey respondents were asked how often they practiced various safety measures. Here’s a sampling of responses, shown with results from a similar 2008 survey. Although practices didn’t vary significantly from 2008 to 2011, more than half were practiced less frequently in 2011. Better performance in 2008 is indicated in red.

Safety Measures	2011 (%)	2008 (%)
Take precautions for children	91	93
Handle equipment safely	83	89
Store chemicals safely	82	79
Handle livestock safely	81	85
Train family members	81	83
Replace guards on machinery	76	76
Train new workers	73	79
Use personal protective equipment	72	68



## Exciting news for landscapers, greenhouses and the agricultural community!

Watch this space for information on new health and safety workshops to be held at a location near you in early 2012. Get equipped with effective healthy and safety program essentials before the onset of the season.

Details will be available soon at [www.wspss.ca](http://www.wspss.ca)

# Volunteer update: developing new ideas and opportunities

Working with and supporting volunteers is a key means for Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) to better understand the health and safety needs of the agriculture sector and help promote injury and illness prevention. Recent activities on several fronts have led to new initiatives and understanding.

## Rural volunteer meetings

Earlier this year, Sandy Miller, WSPS's regional community coordinator for the agriculture sector, organized a series of eight informal meetings with rural volunteers – members of the province's 22 Rural County Farm Safety Associations. Meetings took place in Alma, Kingston, Lindsay, London, Newmarket, Ottawa, Petrolia, and Simcoe. This is double the number of meetings held in past years.

These meetings provided a valuable opportunity to

- recognize recent successes
- seek input on how WSPS can best support volunteer activities
- introduce local WSPS consultants
- provide a venue for candid conversations and networking
- share ideas and plans for 2012

Each meeting identified different challenges and opportunities, but consistent among the meetings was a desire for greater access to information on hazards and greater understanding of legislation and related obligations of workplace parties. Miller responded by sending out information packages to participants. Over the longer term, WSPS will continue building on its information and resources specific to the agriculture sector. Preliminary planning for a possible eight meetings in spring 2012 has already begun. Participating by teleconference may be an option at some locations.

Ontario's rural volunteers are essential partners for WSPS. In 2010, the 250+ members of 22 Rural County Farm Safety Associations reached more than 50,000 people with critical safety messages.

## Networking and Knowledge Exchanges

Many volunteers were interested in hear-

ing about WSPS's Networking and Knowledge Exchange sessions (NKEs). WSPS already has a number of manufacturing-related NKE chapters across the province, and is expanding the program into the agricultural sector. Several sessions have already taken place in southern Ontario, and one is being piloted in Kemptville in early 2012. The exchanges enhance health and safety knowledge and allow participants to share best practices.

Lori Shepherd, a WSPS volunteer and community services coordinator, explains that NKE sessions are often hosted by member employers. For instance, a June 17 session in Amherstburg was hosted by Belwood Poultry Ltd., which provided a tour. "It's much more engaging than holding a session in a formal meeting facility," says Shepherd. Among the topics of discussion: health and safety for new, young and vulnerable workers, and new legislation. "One of the advantages of these sessions is that people realize they are often dealing with similar issues. This leads naturally into discussions on how to address them."

## Agricultural Advisory Council

Comprising representatives of Ontario's farming, horticultural and landscaping industries, council members help WSPS identify health and safety issues and trends in their sectors. These volunteers also exchange ideas and feedback on WSPS programs, services and products.

Recently, council members completed a survey, the results of which helped WSPS crystallize plans for half-day workshops located across the province. On the basis of this feedback, WSPS is planning to conduct regional events with smaller groups and focused topics, rather than a one- or two-day conference with multiple session streams and speakers.

These activities are just a sampling of ways in which WSPS is working with the agricultural community to help prevent injuries and illness. Watch for more coverage in future issues. ■

## NEW ONLINE RESOURCES

### Free e-course: orientation for new agricultural workers

This 90-minute, two-part course introduces health and safety for young and new workers. Among the topics: how to identify job hazards, how to work safely, and the role of workplace health and safety programs. The course also provides guidance on common hazards: working alone, working with chemicals, slips and falls, lifting by hand, machinery and equipment, confined spaces, electricity, handling animals, and violence. \$80 fee is being waived until November 2012. *Aussi disponible en français.* Visit [www.iapa.ca/Catalog/ProductDetails.aspx?id=643](http://www.iapa.ca/Catalog/ProductDetails.aspx?id=643).

### Ministry of Labour farming safety resources page

This new webpage contains health and safety resources for farming operations. Although Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act applies only to those operations with paid workers, all can benefit from the resources. Among them: 6 publications • 5 alerts • 8 guidelines • laws and regulations • a sector plan. Visit [www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/topics/farming.php](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/topics/farming.php).

### Passport to Farm Safety

Safe Communities Canada has customized its successful Passport to Safety program for young Canadians living, working, or planning to work on farms. Passport to Safety is a national safety awareness test that tests your knowledge on workplace health and safety issues and allows you to record your training on an online, printable transcript. Find out more at [www.passporttofarm-safety.com](http://www.passporttofarm-safety.com).

### CASA toolbox talks

The Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) has published a series of online toolbox talks. The talks typically take two to five minutes, and promote discussions with workers. Eight topics are available: chocking wheels • blocking raised equipment • grain bin safety • working alone • battery boosting • ATV safety and gear • lock-out/tag out • overhead wire safety. Learn more at [www.casa-acsa.ca/content/toolbox-talks](http://www.casa-acsa.ca/content/toolbox-talks).

# Confined space 2: BC mushroom farm deaths

**A** Langley, BC incident in which three mushroom farm workers died and two others sustained irreversible brain damage would have been entirely preventable if the employer had complied with health and safety laws and regulations,” says Jeff Dolan, director of investigations for WorkSafeBC. The provincial agency released a 61-page report on the deaths on November 28.

On May 13, 2011, two companies and three employers operating businesses on the site pleaded guilty to 10 charges under the Workers Compensation Act and OHS Regulations.

In a late November sentencing hearing, the judge imposed fines totaling \$350,000 on the two businesses: \$200,000 on the now bankrupt A-1 Mushroom Substratum Ltd., and \$120,000 to H.V. Truong Ltd. The three owners were fined a combined \$30,000.

## The incident

In September 2008, workers from A-1 Mushroom Substratum Ltd., a mushroom compost maker, disconnected a pipe in a pump shed to clear a blockage. The shed had been built to protect pumps and piping that drew process water from an outdoor storage tank into a composting barn.

A plumber had already tried to unclog the pipe and failed. He recommended hiring a professional pump-out service, but instead one of the owners supervised two employees who tried to unclog it themselves. In the process, the two workers were exposed to lethal gases. Co-workers from the compost maker and adjacent mushroom growing and distribution businesses tried to rescue them without safety equipment, and sustained permanent brain injuries.

The consequences could have been even worse. Paramedics responding to a 911 call recognized a potential confined space hazard and prevented anyone else, including one of the owners, from entering the

pump shed. This likely saved the owner and emergency rescue personnel from serious injury or death.

## Causes

The report identified several causes and contributing factors. Among the causes:

- a release of hazardous gases, including hydrogen sulphide and carbon dioxide, when workers disconnected a blocked intake pipe that was part of a process water recycling system.
- release of the gases into a confined space, preventing them from dissipating quickly.

Among the underlying factors:

- accumulation of straw and sludge that blocked the intake pipe. There were no engineering controls such as screens to prevent solids from entering the system, and no administrative controls such as a preventive maintenance program to manage the solids and sludge within the system.
- development of anaerobic conditions within the system. There were no features incorporated to keep the process water uniformly aerated, allowing it to become stagnant.
- missed opportunities to prevent the incident, including poor housekeeping, lack of preventive maintenance, failure to correct anaerobic conditions, and lack of compliance with regulatory requirements that may have helped detect elevated levels of hydrogen sulphide.
- absence of a health and safety system. “Minimal attention was paid to occupational health and safety at this workplace,” the report says. For instance, none of the employers had implemented a health and safety program, no one had conducted a hazard assessment, no steps had been taken to eliminate or minimize confined space risks, and no provisions had been made to rescue workers

WorkSafeBC describes the investigation as probably the most complex in its history. It took months to access key areas of the worksite, and many more months to fully understand the industrial process



Source: WorkSafeBC's 3D re-enactment of the incident

involved and the chronology of events and decisions over five years that contributed to the deaths and permanent injuries.

## Preventing this on your farm

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) offers a range of resources for businesses of all sizes, including farm operations.

1. Learn more about the incident by downloading a copy of the investigation report at [www.worksafebc.com/news\\_room/news\\_releases/2011/new\\_11\\_11\\_28.asp](http://www.worksafebc.com/news_room/news_releases/2011/new_11_11_28.asp). While on the site, watch a 3D re-enactment of the incident and its immediate aftermath.
2. Find out about WSPS's confined space offerings. See “How we can help” on page 2.
3. Establish or strengthen your health and safety policy and program. Call 905-614-1400 or 1-800-494-9777, or visit [www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/WSPS/Training/Policy-and-Program.aspx](http://www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/WSPS/Training/Policy-and-Program.aspx).
4. Check out WSPS's small business courses, products, and consulting services at the numbers above, or visit [www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/WSPS/Training/Small-Business.aspx](http://www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/WSPS/Training/Small-Business.aspx).
5. Learn how to conduct hazard assessments. WSPS has publications and courses in classroom, on-site and e-learning formats. Call the numbers above, or visit [www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/WSPS/Training/Hazard-Assessment.aspx](http://www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/WSPS/Training/Hazard-Assessment.aspx). ■

# “Bill 119”: compliance at least a year away

In 2008, Ontario passed an amendment to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act intended to make workers compensation coverage mandatory for independent operators in construction. This has raised questions among members of Landscape Ontario. Concerns have been voiced about

- **when the amendment takes effect.**

The short answer is probably not in 2012. The amendment is still awaiting proclamation, and as stated in the amendment mandatory compensation coverage would come into effect a year following proclamation.

- **who exactly is affected.** The

amendment appears to apply only to independent operators, with no employees, who perform “construction” work. Self-employed individuals who do

contract work are not currently required to register with WSIB. An independent operator is defined as “a person who carries on an industry included in Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 and who does not employ any workers for that purpose.”

- **what constitutes “construction.”** The Workplace Safety and Insurance Act defines construction as any industry listed in Class G of Schedule 1. Still unclear is whether “construction” includes deck and fence installation and swimming pool installation or paving stone, retaining wall and concrete work. A landscape contractor may do this work as part of a landscape project.

Please note: renovation work to a private residence is exempt from the amendment,

and by extension independent operators and sole proprietors who perform this work.

Landscape Ontario and Workplace Safety & Prevention Services are working together to clarify exactly how the amendments may apply to our stakeholders, and will report additional information to member firms as soon as possible. In the interim, no changes to the status quo are expected to take place before 2013.

*For more information, read the amended Workplace Safety and Insurance Act online at [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_97w16\\_e.htm#BK17](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_97w16_e.htm#BK17) or access the amendments and background information at [www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills\\_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=2100](http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=2100). ■*

## Safety prep for the 2012 season

For many operations, late fall and early winter are the least hectic times of the year. This means it’s an ideal opportunity to rev up your prevention efforts.

HSO Network News asked Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) consultant Steve Zronik what farming operations can do now to ensure the 2012 growing seasons starts off safely. Here’s a sampling.

1a) Review your health and safety plan.

Does it reflect hazards and working conditions that your workers could encounter? Revise and update as needed.

1b) If you don’t have a plan, create one.

See “New farm safety plan: customized for

Ontario operations” on page 1.

2) Take precautions for all winter-related hazards. For instance, slip and fall prevention. Check drainage from farm buildings to prevent ice buildup at entrances and exits, ensure snow is removed to a safe location, keep walkways clear, and salt and sand where required.

3) As you perform pre-startup maintenance on farm equipment, consider all safety issues. For instance, ensure all machine guards, safety switches and shut-offs are in place and functioning properly.

4) Sign up decision-makers for training. Enrol key employees for certification train-

ing whether it’s obligatory or otherwise.

Other possibilities: confined space training, first aid, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, lift truck operation...

5) Prepare a training calendar for the coming season, noting what training to provide, and when. Review your training material to make sure it’s effective and up to date.

6) Check all personal protective equipment (PPE) for wear and damage, such as hearing protection and safety goggles and glasses. Clean and replace worn parts, and order any replacement equipment now.

7) Sign your kids or young workers up for the Passport to Farm Safety (see “New Online Resources,” page 6). ■

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