

Shifting Gears in 2001

During the first 10 years of AMHSA's existence we have seen a continuous gradual improvement in health and safety performance in the municipal sector in Alberta. This has been the general trend for most industries in the province. News releases from the WCB are beginning to warn that this trend may be reversing and that if changes aren't made we will see increases in the numbers and costs of claims in the future.

In planning for 2001, AMHSA's Board of Directors took this into consideration. They also reviewed information, supported by research, regarding what is required to effect meaningful change in the area of health and safety. As a result, in 2001 you will continue to see AMHSA support the health and safety efforts of municipalities through the delivery of an ever-expanding array of training programs. You should also notice an increased emphasis on assisting municipalities create the type of positive safety culture necessary to achieve excellence in health and safety.

Research reveals that involved leadership is fundamental to creating an environment where the health and safety efforts of the organization are likely to be successful. Senior management needs to recognize that health and safety is a key value for their organization and all decision-making needs to reflect this. To assist senior managers and other line management understand their role and involvement in creating a positive safety culture, AMHSA has created a half-day course entitled "Overview of Health and Safety Programs for Managers/Supervisors". AMHSA staff are also available to make presentations to councils and the senior management teams of municipalities regarding their role in health and safety, and the benefits that flow from excellence in this area.

AMHSA's business plan outlines a number of activities that we will undertake to support the efforts of municipalities in achieving outstanding performance in health and safety. These include:

- Increased one-on-one communication with municipal managers to ensure the health and safety needs of municipalities are being addressed and to promote efforts to create a positive safety culture within member organizations.
- Communicating to municipalities that health and safety excellence is an achievable goal and that there are numerous benefits in working towards this goal.
- Identifying and developing champions from within the municipal sector who can talk to their peers about what it takes to achieve health and safety excellence and why you would want to do this.
- Increased emphasis on working with municipal associations and related groups to create opportunities during conferences for making presentations to municipal management about their role in health and safety.

The importance of visibly involved leadership in creating a safety culture that can lead to health and safety excellence can not be overstated. We recognize that some municipalities have already reached this stage and are well on their way to achieving safety excellence. If you are one of these municipalities we would like to hear from you so we can share your success with other municipalities. If you are not there yet we would like to hear from you too, so we can discuss ways to help you achieve this result.

New "Working Alone" Explanation Document

Alberta Human Resources and Employment, Workplace Health and Safety, have published a second edition of the document titled "An Explanation of the General Safety Amendment Regulation 'The Working Alone Amendment'". The second edition was revised by the following:

- If you require further information or need to ask for clarification of any issues related to working alone you can now contact Workplace Health and Safety at one toll-free phone number from any location in the Province. The new telephone number is 1-866-415-8690.
- The section explaining the definition of working alone has been expanded and now includes a discussion of "degrees of separation". This area has also provides more detailed information about students as workers.

A copy of the document (WA002-2) can be downloaded from the Workplace Health and Safety's website at www.gov.ab.ca/lab/facts/ohs/index.html#workingalone. You can also receive a copy by contacting the phone number listed above.

GSR Review Update

Work is continuing on revisions to the General Safety Regulation. The General Safety Regulation Review Task Group, chaired by Alberta Human Resources and Employment, Workplace Health and Safety, continues to meet regularly. The task group is in the process of reviewing public feed back and making changes to the draft based on those comments. Due to the complexity of the regulation and the number of comments the task group was unable to complete this task by the original target date of December 31, 2000. A new target date has been proposed as the end of March 2001. After the draft is complete there are still a number of steps required (resolution of non-consensus issues, legal drafting, review by a government standing policy committee, etc.) before the revised regulation will come into effect. It is probable that the earliest this can be accomplished is the fall of 2001.

2001 Spring Schedule

The updated course spring schedule with locations is enclosed. Register early – some of these courses are already filling up!