

June/July 2004

WCB announces Partnerships Refunds

A record 4300 employers in the province received \$47.3 million in PIR refunds for their dedication to managing health and safety in 2003. This is up from \$37 million in 2002. The average refund was \$11,000.

Sixty eight of these employers are in the municipal sector, and they earned total refunds of \$1,459,058. The Workers' Compensation Board sent refund cheques out in May, and also hosted luncheons in Calgary and Edmonton to recognize some of the top performers. The Cities of Medicine Hat and Red Deer were both recognized at these luncheons. Congratulations to both cities!

As great as it is that so many employers are receiving refunds from the WCB for their health and safety efforts, what is even more rewarding is that employers who participate in the Partnerships program have a lost time frequency rate that is 13% lower than those employers who don't participate, and claims costs of 26% less. This means that participating employers are seeing fewer employees injured and the injuries that are occurring are not as serious. The participants include those who achieved their Certificate of Recognition as well as those who are in the program, but have not yet achieved it. This suggests that implementing solid health and safety management systems, even if the system is not yet quite up to the Partnerships standard, helps prevent injuries, and minimize the seriousness of them.

Congratulations to all Partnerships participants, and keep up the excellent work!

Audit Reminder

This is just a friendly reminder to all municipalities participating in the Partnerships program - health and safety management systems audits are due by November 15th. If you require an external audit contact Rose Ann or Jim by August 31st to arrange one. If you require an internal audit, there is no need to contact AMHSA in advance. Copies of all internal and external audits must be submitted to AMHSA for review by November 15th, 2004.

AMHSA is developing a Certificate of Recognition policies and procedures manual which should be ready by the end of July. Copies of the manual will be distributed to all auditors at that time. There are a few new requirements that auditors will need to be aware of (for example in selecting who to interview, auditors must now demonstrate that the sample is fully representative of the organization - by department, facility, level within the organization, experience, etc). So when you receive your copy please read through it and give Jim or Rose Ann a call if you have any questions.

Upcoming Conferences

There are two health and safety conferences coming up in Alberta this fall. Both conferences have multiple streams each day so that participants can choose the topics of most interest to them.

RUSA/ACSC/AMHSA Safety and Utility Workshop

This conference is geared to the municipal sector and is scheduled for November 30th - December 2nd in Red Deer. Planning is well underway and some of this year's topics will include:

- Alberta Human Resources and Employment and the role of the Workplace Health and Safety Officer
- Ergonomics and Repetitive Strain Injuries - sessions on equipment operators and some case studies
- Workers' Compensation Board's violence prevention program
- Risk Management
- Substance Abuse at work
- Mold - an introduction

The schedule should be finalized and information packages sent out in September.

Alberta Health and Safety Conference

This conference is organized by a committee of health and safety related organizations and associations and is open to all industries. It will run from November 8th - 10th in Edmonton. Their schedule should be available in the fall, but in the mean time, more information can be found on their website:

www.hsconference.com.

OHS Legislation Manuals Available

AMHSA purchased lots and lots of copies of the new OHS Act, Regulation and Code for the Overview workshop that we offered this spring. Now that the courses are done, we have 34 extra copies and we are willing to sell them to municipalities. We're selling them for \$55 (including GST), plus the cost of shipping. The list price from Queen's Printer is \$64.95 plus GST and shipping. The manuals will be sold on a first come - first served basis, but limited to 5 copies per municipality. Contact Lorraine if you would like a copy.

Survey Reminder

Please let us know what you think: what is AMSHA doing well; what could we do better; what new services would you like us to offer (and if you'd be willing to pay for those services); what should we do differently; etc. We sent out a copy of the survey to each municipal manager in June, and would like the information in time for our planning meeting in September. If you cannot find the survey, give Lorraine a call.

Fall Courses

We always take a break from regularly scheduled courses in the summer because there is so much other work going on in municipal operations. We will start up again in late September or early October and will send the schedule out with the August newsletter. But if you don't want to wait until then and would like a course held on-site, give Lorraine a call. The fees are the same as for a scheduled course, but you will need to provide a minimum of 10 people per course.

Emergency Preparedness

All of you who have a health and safety management system know that one element of your system is emergency response planning for incidents that could impact the health or safety of your staff. The purpose of this planning is to ensure efficient and effective action if something goes wrong. In addition the Occupational Health and Safety Code now requires all employers to develop an emergency response plan to address any situation in which the evacuation or rescue of employees could be needed.

But in addition to addressing emergencies to staff, the Alberta Disaster Services Act also require municipalities to "prepare and approve emergency plans and programs" for the community in accordance with a provincially approved format. An emergency is defined as "a present or imminent event that requires prompt coordination of action or special regulation of persons or property to protect the health, safety, or welfare of people, or to limit damage to property". Examples could include blizzards, black-outs, tornado, flood, bomb threat, etc.

All municipalities need to develop plans for emergencies to their staff, as well as the bigger emergency plans. In both cases training is required and plans need to be tested and revised.