

May 2005

## Partnerships & PIR Update

Congratulations to all of you participating in the Partnerships program. It's wonderful to see the commitment to health and safety demonstrated through participation in this program. Seventy three municipalities met all the program requirements in 2004 by obtaining or maintaining a Certificate of Recognition, and participating in disability management training. These municipalities will receive PIR refunds from the Workers' Compensation Board of somewhere between 5% and 20% of their industry premiums. This will amount to almost \$1.7 million dollars for these 73 municipalities! The WCB will send out refund cheques in late May.

Some other municipalities have been working on their health and safety management systems, but were unable to meet the Partnerships program requirements in 2004. Although you didn't meet all the requirements, hopefully you are seeing other benefits to having a management system in place, such as a more safety aware workforce, fewer incidents and more participation in identification of hazards. We hope you will continue to work on you system and wish you success in 2005.

If your municipality has not participated in this program in the past and would like to, contact the WCB at (780) 498-7936, or go to the link on their website: [http://www.wcb.ab.ca/employers/join\\_pir.asp](http://www.wcb.ab.ca/employers/join_pir.asp). Some employers are interested in implementing a health and safety management system, but don't join the program right away, because they don't think that they are ready to obtain a CoR. However, the WCB does grant a "grace year" for new participants. What this means is: if you register with the WCB in the PIR program in 2005, but don't get a Certificate of Recognition until 2006, you might be eligible for a refund for both 2006 and 2005.

And just to make it more interesting, the WCB is reviewing its PIR refund system and looking at ways to enhance it. Nothing has been confirmed, but there is talk of an increase in the minimum refund. Stay tuned for more information.

## Alberta Human Resources and Employment News

As you may know, a new Minister was appointed to the department last fall, after the provincial election. The new Minister is the Honourable Mike Cardinal. Mr. Cardinal has been a member of the Alberta Legislature since 1989 and has served as Minister for several departments. And a new Deputy Minister was appointed in February - he is Ulysses Currie. Mr. Currie's responsibilities include providing advice to the Minister, and leadership to the department staff. Prior to joining AHRE he spent 25 years with the Edmonton Police Service, and in 2002 was invested into the Order of Merit of the Police Forces by the Governor General for his lifetime service to the community.

In other health and safety news, although we've been seeing a general decrease in the number of work related injuries in this province over the past few years, the number of fatalities remains high. In 2004 there were a total of 124 work related fatalities - as a result of workplace incidents, driving for work, or occupational disease. This is down slightly from 2003, when there were 127 fatalities. This year, as of April 10, there have been 12 workplace incident fatalities, and media reports suggest that there has been at least one more since this date. There were 11 workplace incidents during this same period last year. (Current information about occupational disease and highway traffic fatalities is not available). So

although we are making improvements in occupational health and safety, the risk of serious injury and death in the workplace still remains high. We all need to keep health and safety as a core value in how we conduct our business, and continuously consider the health and safety implications of everything we do.

## Upcoming Conferences

Millard Health is hosting a one day conference: Working Together to Unravel the Mystery of Return to Work Barriers, on June 8. Some of the barriers encountered when trying to return injured workers to the workplace in a safe and timely manner include: ineffective planning; miscommunication between the employer and health care providers; lack of understanding of the psychosocial issues (e.g. chronic pain, anxiety, depression). This symposium is intended to help employers recognize and address these concerns. For more information, go to the Millard Health website - [www.millardhealth.com](http://www.millardhealth.com).

Later in 2005 are two health and safety conferences that AMHSA gets involved in:

- Alberta Health and Safety Conference: November 7 - 9 in Calgary
- RUSA/ACSC/AMHSA Safety and Utilities Conference: November 29 - December 1 in Red Deer

We'll provide updates and website links as more details become available.