

## Leadership in prevention through collaboration:

A workplace injury and illness prevention plan for  
Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015 – 2017



“We must learn from industrial tragedies and focus efforts on preventing all occupational health hazards.”



WorkplaceNL

**Our vision:** All workers protected from workplace risks.

# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| FOREWORD .....   | 2  |
| The need for a Workplace Injury Prevention Plan .....                              | 3  |
| The road travelled .....   | 4  |
| The magnitude of workplace injuries .....  | 4  |
| Still more to do .....   | 5  |
| Health and safety priorities .....   | 7  |
| Assaults and violent acts (New) .....  | 8  |
| Soft-tissue injuries .....   | 8  |
| Occupational disease and illness .....   | 8  |
| Young workers .....  | 8  |
| Working at heights (New Phase) .....   | 9  |
| Serious injuries (New) .....   | 9  |
| Road safety in construction zones (New) .....                                      | 9  |
| Improving safety performance .....   | 10 |
| Partnering for success .....   | 10 |
| Stakeholders and partners in occupational health and safety .....                  | 11 |
| Stakeholder input .....  | 14 |
| Creating a prevention plan .....   | 14 |
| A workplace injury and illness prevention plan for Newfoundland and Labrador ..... | 15 |
| Vision .....   | 15 |
| Mission .....  | 15 |
| Goals .....  | 15 |
| Approach and Principles .....  | 15 |
| Strategic outcomes and objectives .....  | 17 |
| Safety leadership .....  | 20 |
| Preventing occupational disease .....  | 21 |
| Industry collaboration and partnerships .....                                      | 23 |
| Education and certification training .....   | 24 |
| OH&S programs and systems .....  | 26 |
| Enforcement practices .....  | 27 |
| Moving forward.....  | 29 |

---

# Foreword

## **WorkplaceNL is very proud to present Leadership in Prevention through Collaboration: A Workplace Injury Prevention Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador.**

This three-year plan outlines opportunities to improve occupational health and safety (OH&S) in workplaces in Newfoundland and Labrador, with a principal focus on collaborating with others to implement best practices. There are countless examples of effective health and safety systems and programs in our province. This plan calls for sharing these best practices so that every worker has the same level of protection, regardless of where they work.



Working together, WorkplaceNL and its partners have acted strategically to develop and implement prevention strategies for Newfoundland and Labrador. We have focused on preventing occupational disease, young worker safety, establishing certification training standards, and developing safety sector councils. Our strategic partnerships are working. Our young workers are leading the province in preventing injuries with a lost-time injury rate of 1.5 injuries per 100 workers, a 17% reduction over the past 5 years. Our certification training standards are reducing injuries when workers are working at heights, entering confined spaces, or working in traffic control. Our safety sector councils in construction, forestry, municipalities, and fish harvesting are fostering industry partnerships, creating industry standards for safety, and advancing effective safety training at the industry level.

WorkplaceNL is committed to making Newfoundland and Labrador workplaces safer for all workers, and we will continue to partner with all stakeholders to achieve a culture where health and safety in the workplace is valued. Whether it is partnering with the CNIB to deliver an Industrial Eye Safety Program or with Husky Energy to deliver first-aid training for our high school students completing Workplace Safety 3220, we will continue the collaborative efforts to make our workplaces safer, healthier, and more productive.

WorkplaceNL believes that all workplace injuries are preventable. We will not waiver from our commitment to develop and deliver effective programs and initiatives to keep our workers safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Galway'.

**Leslie Galway**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
WorkplaceNL

# The need for a workplace injury prevention plan



"Many soft-tissue injuries occur due to poor manual handling in the workplace that requires a person to lift, push, pull, carry, or otherwise handle an object."



## The need for a workplace injury prevention plan

### The road travelled

WorkplaceNL has continued to honor the historic compromise between workers and employers that created the no-fault insurance system in Newfoundland and Labrador in 1951. A lot has changed over those 63 years. In 1951, the entire occupational health and safety (OH&S) portfolio was housed at the original compensation board with one staff person responsible for the entire province. This individual would travel the province via coastal boats delivering first-aid supplies to different communities. There was no legislation to guide and govern OH&S in the province, and knowledge of health and safety processes and practices was rudimentary.

Today, Newfoundland and Labrador enjoys robust, modern OH&S legislation, effective education and training programming, and has implemented safety programs and systems in the workplace that mitigate the risk of injury. Our equipment and materials are tested to meet safety standards. Our workers and employers understand the principles of risk and loss – and they have a greater understanding of the science behind OH&S. We have qualified health and safety professionals leading the advancement of safety programs and systems. We have industry associations sharing best practices. We also have certification training standards ensuring that workers are protected when completing high-risk activities. The landscape for occupational health and safety has changed significantly in Newfoundland and Labrador.

### The magnitude of workplace injuries

The lost-time incidence rate in Newfoundland and Labrador is the lowest in 63 years at 1.6 per 100 workers – a reduction of 68% since 1990

(see Figure 1). This significant decline in the lost-time incidence rate represents the prevention of over 23,000 injuries. This safety performance could not have been achieved without a focus on preventing workplace injuries, strategically identifying areas for improvement, and working together through dialogue and collaboration to improve safety practices.



## Injury Statistics, 2013 Newfoundland and Labrador

- **5,530** claims for work-related injuries
- **261** serious injuries at work
- **25** deaths from work-related disease
- **5** fatal accidents due to work-related injury
- **374** cases of work-related disease
- **665** young workers injured

SERIOUS INJURIES RATE  
per 10,000 workers

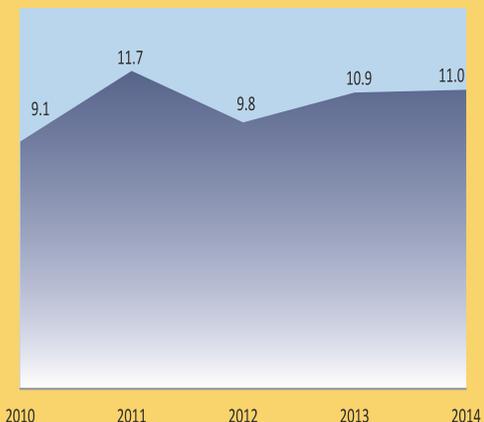
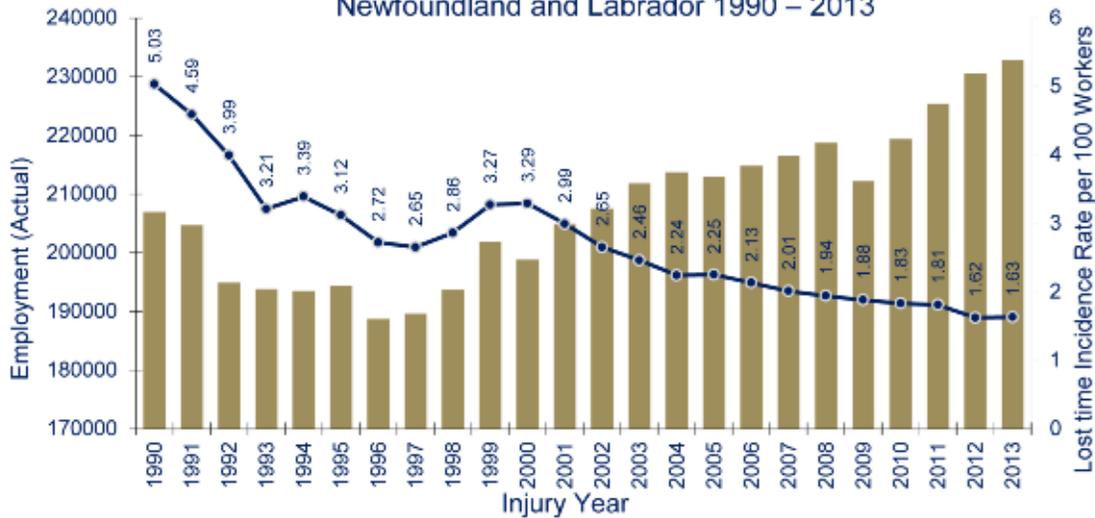


Figure 1: Lost Time Injury Rate per 100 Workers and Employment Newfoundland and Labrador 1990 – 2013



**Over the past decade, workplace injury and illness rates have been drastically reduced in most every injury category in Newfoundland and Labrador. The soft tissue injury rate has declined by 21%, the fall from heights injury rate by 22%, and the young worker injury rate has been reduced by 32%.**

### Still more to do

Every day in Newfoundland and Labrador, an average of 15 workers are injured at work. For most workers, their injuries will heal very quickly and return to work will be imminent. For others, the situation will not be so clear and precise. We do know that one worker out of the 15 will not return to work as a result of permanent disability – a life changed forever filled with stress, medical treatments, and functional limitations. A significant proportion of all work-related diseases and injuries in Newfoundland and Labrador are the result of soft tissue injuries, occupational disease and illness, working at heights and serious injuries. We also know that two of the 15 workers involve young workers aged 15-24 who often lack the knowledge and experience in health and safety to make informed decisions. These priorities account for a significant proportion of all work-related diseases and injuries in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**Since 2006, the injury rates for several other injury categories have seen substantial declines:**

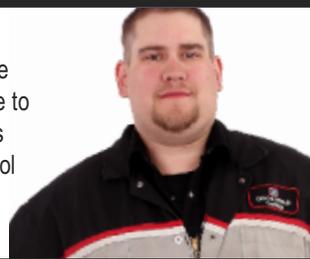
- Head injury rate decreased by **44%**
- Eye injury rate decreased by **52%**
- Hand injury rate declined by **52%**
- Back injury rates declined by **38%**
- Foot injury rate declined by **52%**
- Accident fatality rates declined **25%**



# Health and safety priorities



“Young workers often lack the knowledge and experience to identify workplace hazards and effective ways to control their impact.”



## Health and safety priorities

### Assaults and violent acts

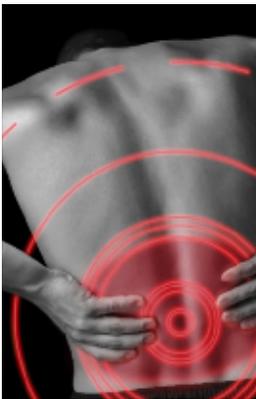
In 2013, WorkplaceNL registered 154 claims due to assaults and violence in the workplace, up from 56 claims in 2006. While the OH&S Regulations, which were proclaimed in 2009, require employers to conduct risk assessments for workplace violence and working alone, the incidence of assaults and violent acts continue to rise in our workplaces. Over 66% of these claims come from the health-care industry, especially in long-term care settings where patients who suffer from dementia and other diseases strike staff. However, 21% of the injuries are coming from the service industry,



particularly in retail environments and pharmacies. The risk potential for serious or fatal injuries due to assaults and workplace violence is increasing steadily, particularly in a climate where crime and addiction issues within the community seem to have a high impact on the workplace.

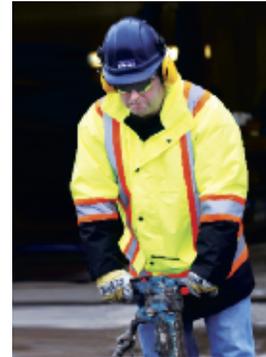
### Soft-tissue injuries

As required under the OH&S Regulations, employers are required to conduct risk assessments for the potential of workers developing musculoskeletal injuries. In 2013, WorkplaceNL accepted and registered 2,625 lost-time claims relating to soft issue injuries which represented 69% of all lost-time claims. Many of these injuries occur due to poor manual handling in the workplace that requires a person to lift, push, pull, carry, or otherwise handle an object. Poor manual handling practices can lead to musculoskeletal diseases and injuries, including sprains and strains, and overuse disorders.



## Occupational disease and illness

Newfoundland and Labrador has had an unfortunate history of occupational disease and illness in the workplace, particularly in the mining industry. Workers from the St. Lawrence Fluorspar Mine and the Advocate Asbestos Mine in Baie Verte were exposed to substances that have caused significant health issues, and death. With long latency periods of 30-40 years, many of the health effects did not become evident until much later in the life of the worker, often after retirement. We must learn from these industrial tragedies and focus efforts on preventing all occupational health hazards.



There are numerous health hazards in today's workplace that pose similar risks to workers. Wood dust, silica, fumes, chemicals, gases and particulates, physical agents such as noise, thermal stress, vibration radiation, viruses, and bacteria can cause occupational cancers, respiratory diseases, and other work-related illnesses. Occupational health hazards have to remain a priority in our prevention strategies as they are a leading cause of premature death in workers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

### Young workers

Workers, aged 15-24, pose unique challenges for OH&S. These workers often lack the knowledge and experience to identify workplace hazards and effective ways to control their impact. These facts elevate the risk of injury to young workers, and potentially to other workers in the workplace. Over the past decade, some success in this area has been realized. The young worker injury rate has been reduced by 32% and is leading the province in injury reduction. However, educating our youth and giving them the skills and knowledge to identify health and safety hazards in the workplace must remain a key focus for preventing injury and illness.



## Working at heights

Working at heights is a high risk activity. In 2013, WorkplaceNL registered and accepted 204 claims for falls from heights with 99.4% being traumatic in nature. Falls from heights are a major risk of death and serious injury in the workplace, particularly in the construction industry. With the imple-

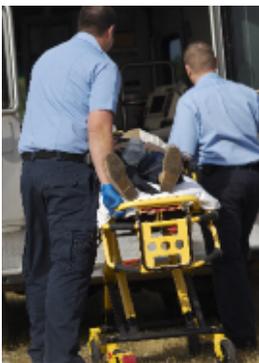


mentation of a Fall Protection Certification Training Standard in 2012 Newfoundland and Labrador set the bar for educating workers who work at heights. The skills, knowledge, and competency to work safely at heights should remain a key focus for all workplaces in Newfoundland and Labrador.

A zero tolerance approach from enforcement will continue as working at height in an unsafe manner still remains the number one reason work is halted by an OHS Officer in this province. However, while working at heights will continue to be a key initiative for OHS enforcement, an era of appropriate protection for all workers remains possible, but only through the continued diligence from all workers, employers, and stakeholders.

## Serious injuries

Serious injuries remain a concern for all health and safety professionals throughout the province. In 2013,



WorkplaceNL registered and accepted 261 claims for serious injuries and most of these claims resulted in permanent disability. We must do more to prevent these injuries from occurring.

Our certification training standards and enforcement activity must be diligent to recognize high risk activity,

and develop program and strategies to help lower the risk potential for injury. However, these efforts will not be effective without cooperation and compliance from our workplace partners.

We recognize that work can be very hazardous with significant impact on the health and well-being of workers.

We also recognize that the risk of injury is mitigated when appropriate health and safety systems and programs are effectively implemented through a the partnership between employers and workers. While there has been a significant improvement in safety performance of our province, we recognize that work-related disease and injury rates are still too high - especially when these diseases and injuries are preventable.

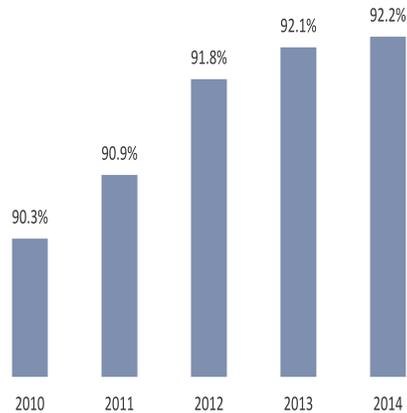
## Road safety in construction zones

The increase in infrastructure projects and road work is resulting in elevated risk of injury on road construction sites. Over the past number of years, high speeds combined with increases in distracted driving are posing great challenges to law enforcement. Combine this with motor vehicles that are becoming more advanced with technology and computer screens, road construction is becoming increasingly dangerous. WorkplaceNL has partnered with



Service NL, Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Safety Council (NLCSA), the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to increase awareness of safety in construction zones and advance better controls to improve worker protection. While some of these controls may be engineering in nature, the balance of education and enforcement must also remain a core focus of this plan.

## PERCENTAGE OF INJURY-FREE EMPLOYERS



### Improving safety performance

WorkplaceNL and the OH&S Branch firmly believe that all workplace incidents are preventable, and zero harm is achievable if effective controls are used to lower the risk of injury. Partnerships and collaboration are key to improving safety performance. A plan that provides all stakeholders and partners with a common vision to improve OH&S and to derive shared priorities is worth the investment.

Improving safety performance has a wide range of benefits to employers and workers, and all of society. Since safety is a shared responsibility, it increases productivity and improves the quality of life for workers. Safety should never be viewed as a “cost” of doing business – but rather an investment in productivity, quality, and a worker’s well-being. Improved safety performance also has a direct correlation to the lowering of health costs and workers’ compensation premiums. The potential for economic gain is significant. Workplaces that cannot properly manage safety are also challenged to properly manage business functions which impacts profitability and sustainability. WorkplaceNL incurs \$145 million annually in claim payments due to work-related diseases and injuries.

To significantly reduce the current injury frequency and associated costs, we need to address a range of OH&S issues. We must hold health and safety as a core “value”, as opposed to a “priority”. We recognize that

priorities change; values rarely do. If we value health and safety, we will invest in health and safety systems and programs, and it will be ingrained in all aspects of our business. We also recognize the value of education and enforcement, working in partnership, to reduce injury and illness in the workplace. The best engineered workplaces cannot properly function without the knowledge, skills, and competencies attained through effective education and training. Nor can these processes function without an effective compliance and monitoring framework within the organization and externally through enforcement activities.

Newfoundland and Labrador employers and workers are building effective OH&S programs and systems, resulting in a culture of safety that is amongst the best in Canada. These safety metrics could not be achieved without the resolve of workers and employers, working in partnership to improve health and safety at work. The balance between the three E’s of health and safety – engineering, education, and enforcement – is improving all of our safety metrics. We recognize that properly engineered safety programs and systems, timely and effective education to improve competency, and a strategic and targeted enforcement practices result in improvements in health and safety.

### Partnering for success

Successful protection of workers from workplace risks can only be achieved with leadership and collaboration, where all workplace parties partner for success, share ideas, and resolve safety issues through proven, systematic safety techniques and practices. The control of workplace hazards is not an easy task. In today’s workplaces, it can be clouded by a myriad of technology and complex workplace hazards.

Enhancing safety performance requires the collective efforts of our primary stakeholders, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour (NLFL) and the Newfoundland and Labrador Employers Council (NLEC), as well as our health and safety partners. We must build consensus and collaborate to achieve a better safety performance in our workplaces. WorkplaceNL and the OH&S Branch will remain active partners in implementing this prevention plan, and will work diligently with all workplace parties to make our vision of zero harm to workers a reality. This plan will guide our work, policies, and programs to advance worker protection and set the tone for enforcement and education activity.

# Stakeholders and partners in occupational health and safety



“The risk of injury is mitigated when appropriate health and safety systems and programs are effectively implemented through the partnership between employers and workers.”





## Occupational health and safety stakeholders

### Newfoundland and Labrador Employers' Council

The Newfoundland and Labrador Employers' Council (NLEC) is one of two primary stakeholders of record for WorkplaceNL, representing employers. The NLEC provides advocacy, communication and training for its members in matters that affect the employment relationship. Established in 1982, the NLEC enables employers to present a collective point of view on employment issues, including areas such as labour standards, labour relations, employment law, human resource management, OH&S, workers' compensation, and employment insurance. "Its membership includes employers and employer associations from the public and private sectors in all regions of the province.

### Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour

The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour (NLFL) is WorkplaceNL's stakeholder of record representing workers. The NLFL has a proud history of representing the interests of union members and workers since 1936, advocating for improved workplace rights, occupational health and safety, workers' compensation, employment insurance programs, universal health care, education, and worker training. The NLFL is made up of nearly 30 affiliated unions, 500 locals and six District Labour Councils. They represent more than 65,000 working women and men from every sector of our economy.

### Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Safety Association

Founded by 16 construction-related organizations in November 1996, the Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Safety Association (NLCSA) is an industry-driven, not-for-profit corporation committed to providing effective and affordable safety training and related services to the province's construction industry. The NLCSA, through programs like the Certificate of Recognition™ (COR™), is setting a standard for building safer, more productive workplaces throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

### Forestry Safety Association of Newfoundland and Labrador

The Forestry Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (FSANL) is dedicated to the health and safety of forestry workers in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Association was started in 2009 to advance safety standards within the forestry sector.

### Municipal Safety Council of Newfoundland and Labrador

Created in 2011, the Municipal Safety Council of Newfoundland and Labrador (MSCNL) is the voice for all OH&S matters in the municipal sector. This sector has higher than average incidents of injury in workers and third-party contractors. With this in mind, MSCNL's purpose is to promote and improve all aspects of OH&S and return to work in the municipal sector.



## Newfoundland and Labrador Fish Harvesting Safety Association

The Newfoundland and Labrador Fish Harvesting Safety Association (NL-FHSA), established in 2012, promotes safety education and awareness initiatives amongst fish harvesters, and works to reduce workplace injuries, illness and fatalities in the fishing industry. The NL-FHSA is a joint venture of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, WorkplaceNL and the Professional Fish Harvesters' Certification Board (PFHCB), consisting of owners/operators and crews of fishing vessels near shore, 40-65 fleet sector, and the offshore sector.



## Occupational Health and Safety Branch, Service NL, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

The OH&S Branch regulates OH&S in all provincial workplaces in Newfoundland and Labrador. A central role for the OH&S Branch is to enact legislation that governs workplace health and safety and complete workplace inspections to assess compliance with the OH&S Act & Regulations. The OHS legislation provides the framework

for OHS in the province and is the minimum standard that workplace must meet.

Staff also respond to complaints, investigate work refusals where the workplace parties are unable to resolve a serious health and safety matter and investigate serious incidents and accidents. The Branch employs staff with a variety of expertise in engineering, industrial hygiene, radiation safety, including industry specific and general health and safety practices. Each year staff develop and implement a risk based approach to targeting industries and activities aimed at holding workplace parties accountable for ensuring a safe and healthy work environment.

## WorkplaceNL

Serving approximately 13,000 injured workers and more than 19,000 employers, WorkplaceNL is an employer-funded, no fault insurance system that promotes safe and healthy workplaces, provides return-to-work programs and offers fair compensation to injured workers and their dependents. Since 1998, WorkplaceNL has been responsible for preventing workplace injuries and illnesses by:

- promoting public awareness of workplace health and safety issues;
- educating employers, workers and others about workplace health and safety;
- providing services to health and safety committees and representatives;
- setting standards for certification requirements under the OH&S Act;
- working with the OH&S Branch, Service NL, with respect to workplace health and safety;
- providing funding for workplace health and safety research; and
- partnering with industry associations, government departments, unions and health and safety coalitions across the province to reduce workplace injuries and diseases.

## Stakeholder input

WorkplaceNL and the OH&S Branch recognize that stakeholders have provided considerable feedback regarding the prevention of injuries and illness over the past two years. Over the course of 2012-13, stakeholders provided feedback to the Statutory Review Committee which closely examined the role of prevention in the workers compensation system. The Statutory Review Committee heard a very clear message from all workplace parties concerning education and training in the workplace. Employers, labour groups, and injured workers support increased education through prevention to reduce injuries and to foster positive approaches to safety in the workplace. The key concerns raised by stakeholders included the need to increase education and training for young workers, and improve accessibility and affordability of required OH&S committee education and training. They also suggested new approaches for prevention, education and promotion while emphasizing certification training standards. Lastly, they heard clearly that WorkplaceNL and the OH&S Branch must continue to promote the role and development of safety sector councils.

In addition, stakeholders were consulted on the review of the OH&S Committee Program, the development of an Occupational Disease Prevention Strategy, and the development of new Certification Training Standards. Many stakeholders provided input through verbal presentations, discussions, and written submissions. We thank our partners for their time, collaboration, and efforts to make prevention meaningful for workers and employers.

Prior to completion of this plan, WorkplaceNL and the OH&S Branch released a draft Prevention Plan to our primary stakeholders and safety partners for written feedback. WorkplaceNL and the OH&S Branch would like to acknowledge the written feedback received from the following organizations:

- Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour (NLFL)
- Newfoundland and Labrador Employers' Council (NLEC)
- Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Safety Association (NLCSA)
- Forestry Safety Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (FSANL)
- Canadian Society of Safety Engineers (CSSE), Avalon Chapter
- Safety Services Newfoundland and Labrador



## Creating a prevention plan

Developing a workplace culture that mitigates health and safety risk resulting in zero harm to the worker is difficult work. However, we know there are countless examples of workplaces in Newfoundland and Labrador where this has been achieved. In 2013, 92% of all employers in Newfoundland and Labrador were injury-free, the culmination of hard work and effective and efficient safety systems and programs.

We recognize that workplace culture is dependent on the safety leadership within the workplace. Employers who embrace and endorse safety principles into all lines of business have developed great safety cultures in their workplaces. Worker protection becomes a value, and every decision, practice, and program advances this cause.

This plan was developed by WorkplaceNL in association with the OH&S Branch and WorkplaceNL's partners and stakeholders following the results of previous stakeholder consultations. We followed a three stage process. The first stage began with a jurisdictional review of workplace injury prevention in other provinces and territories in Canada, including some international work from the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.

In 2014, a review was undertaken of each Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) with a focus on injury prevention initiatives, educational programming and awareness activities that have had an impact on safety performance.



The jurisdictional review provided an opportunity to critically review a large body of information regarding injury prevention and assess its relevance to Newfoundland and Labrador.

The second stage in the process was to compile the findings into a draft plan that will be shared with our stakeholders for comment. The information contained in the draft document is provided for critical review to generate feedback to help finalize this plan.

The last phase will be to incorporate the views and commentary of our primary stakeholders and partners and incorporate them into this plan.

## **A workplace injury and illness prevention plan for Newfoundland and Labrador**

This prevention plan includes the vision, mission, commitment and value statements that are the underpinnings of the plan. Key safety performance metrics are included as measures to gauge success of the plan and to focus efforts on common goals. The ultimate goal is to further reduce the provincial lost-time injury rate through strategic investments in high-risk areas of health and safety.

WorkplaceNL and the OH&S Branch, Service NL, believe that we must address the high incidence of soft-tissue injury, serious injury, and occupational disease and illness. To better reflect the most common types of injuries and the industries in which those injuries are most likely to occur, the new plan adopts targeted demographic, injury and industry priority areas, while maintaining its focus on employers that generate the highest risk of workplace injuries.

The plan focuses on the two main partners in injury prevention – employers and workers. All other parties to this plan support and provide services to enable employers and workers to successfully implement effective OH&S programs in the workplace. However, the plan does target sub-groups of employers and workers, specifically, supervisors and managers, young workers, high risk occupations, and high risk industries. Targeting and identifying populations that are at a greater risk of injury and coordinating intervention efforts based on evidence and best-practices will optimally generate the best outcomes.

### **Vision**

Our vision of healthy and safe workers protected from workplace risks has to be a shared vision built from a set of core values and common goals. Worker protection remains the core principle behind all occupational health safety legislation, programs, systems, and practices.

We know that if we can effectively control the hazards in our workplace to provide an optimal level of protection for all workers, then we know that our vision will be achieved.

Worker protection is achievable if we have active partnerships and collaboration in our workplaces, within industry, and in given sectors. There is a significant body of health and safety knowledge that exists within workplaces and within industry - it must be leveraged and translated so that all stakeholders fully understand the risks of injury associated with workplace hazards. Together with our partners, we will prevent workplace injuries and illnesses through promotion, protection and education.

### **Mission**

Our mission is to create healthy and safe workplaces throughout Newfoundland and Labrador through collaboration with workplace parties and partnerships to reduce health and safety risks to workers.

### **Goals**

This plan has the following strategic and targeted goals to reduce injury and illness at work:

- control workplace hazards to prevent workplace injury, illness, and disease;
- advance health and safety programs that protect the worker;
- target industry and workplaces with elevated risks;
- educate employers and workers to enhance skills, knowledge, and competency in mitigating health and safety risks;
- control the costs of workplace injury and illness;
- create awareness of safety practices in our workplaces and communities; and
- promote the importance of compliance with legislation.

### **Approach and principles**

This plan maintains the following core health and safety principles:

- workplaces injuries and illnesses are preventable;
- partnerships improve safety performance within industry and workplaces;
- safety risks need to be assessed using transparent and effective processes;
- build consensus and hold partners accountable;
- avoid duplication and maximize use of resources;
- use best practices to advance worker protection; and
- integrate research into injury and illness prevention programs, services, and initiatives.



# Strategic outcomes and objectives



“Falls from heights are a major risk of death and serious injury in the workplace, particularly in the construction industry. ”



## Strategic outcomes and objectives



### The plan identifies six interconnecting strategic outcomes and objectives that support its vision:

1. Safety Leadership
2. Occupational Disease Prevention
3. Health and Safety Education and Training
4. Industry Collaboration and Development
5. OH&S Programs and Systems
6. Enforcement Practices

These six strategic objectives provide a focus for action over the next three years. Evidence suggests that these will have significant impacts on the desired outcomes of the prevention plan. They also represent a coherent and balanced framework for action that will involve all key parties working toward the plan's vision.

### Safety performance, measurement and evaluation

Measurement is a key step in any management process and forms the basis of continual improvement. If measurement is not carried out correctly, the effectiveness of the health and safety management system is undermined and there is no reliable information to inform managers that health and safety risks are controlled.

Safety performance measurement is fundamental to detecting and identifying hazards before they cause injury and illness. The routine collection and analysis of health and safety data in the workplace can have a positive influence on the leading and lagging indicators of safety performance. Whether it is conducting root cause analysis in incident investigations or the evaluation of workplace

hazards based on frequency, severity, and probability, employers in Newfoundland and Labrador can critically examine their safety indicators, detect trends, and implement appropriate controls to mitigate safety risks.

It is also important for employers to share their safety performance with OH&S Committees and Worker Health and Safety (WH&S) Representatives/Designates. These individuals can critically review the trends and act to implement appropriate controls to lower the risks of hazards. It is also important that employers benchmark their safety performance with their industry and at the provincial level. WorkplaceNL and the OH&S Branch can work with employers to perform this benchmark analysis. As a result, employers can quickly assess problem areas and explore possible avenues for improvement.

### Leading and trailing indicators

Organizations often find health and safety performance measurement a difficult subject. They struggle to develop health and safety performance measures which are not based solely on injury and ill-health statistics. If managing directors or CEOs were asked how they measured their companies' performance, they would probably mention measures like profit, return on investment or market share. A common feature of the measures quoted would be that they are generally positive in nature - reflecting achievement - rather than negative, reflecting failure. If the same people were asked how they measured their companies' health and safety performance, it is likely that the only measure quoted would be injury statistics. While the general business performance of an organization is subject to a range of positive measures, for health and safety, it often comes down to one negative measure - injury and ill-health statistics - measures of failures.

**Figure: Trailing measures of safety performance  
in Newfoundland and Labrador**



Health and safety differs from many areas measured by managers because success results in the absence of an outcome (injuries or ill health) rather than a presence. But a low injury or ill-health rate, even over a period of years, is no guarantee that risks are being controlled and will not lead to injuries or ill health in the future. This is particularly true in organisations where there is a low probability of accidents but where major hazards are present. Here the historical record can be a deceptive indicator of safety performance.

A primary purpose in measuring safety is to develop intervention strategies to avoid future incidents. Leading indicators are proactive, revealing areas of weakness in advance of adverse events and aid risk assessment and management.

**Figure: Leading measures of safety performance  
in Newfoundland and Labrador**



<sup>1</sup> The Health and Safety Awareness Index will be an annual survey of workers and their perception of health and safety risks in their workplace. The index will help WorkplaceNL understand safety culture and the level of health and safety awareness within workplaces.

WorkplaceNL and the OH&S Branch, will work closely with key stakeholders to facilitate routine reporting of key statistical indicators relating to workplace health and safety. Leading and trailing indicators will be used to determine the effectiveness of this prevention plan. Where applicable, these indicators will provide stakeholders and our partners with regular guidance on safety performance in our province and provide immediate feedback on the attainment of the plan's vision.



## OUTCOME #1

### Safety Leadership

Safety leadership is the key ingredient to attain safety performance in any workplace. While most would agree that safety leadership and workplace culture is largely determined by the head of any organization, we also realize that safety leadership is required in all levels of an organization. CEO's and General Managers do have a strong influence on safety performance, but effective health and safety systems have leaders throughout the organization. Whether it is completing an informal inspection or identifying a hazard to protect a co-worker, safety leaders are required at all levels within the workplace.

Safety benefits do positively impact the bottom line, and managers and supervisors have legal obligations to protect the health and safety of their employees. Developing safety leaders in your business can mean the difference between marginal and world-class results. It long has been accepted that successful OH&S programs push the responsibility for safety down into the organization, using the power of many to foster a safe work environment.

This requires front line supervisors and all employees to take on additional responsibilities to protect the health and safety of all workers.

WorkplaceNL supports establishing Safety Sector Councils as transparent, non-adversarial environments for employers, labour and government to address health and safety issues in workplaces and to foster a culture of safety. Safety Sector Councils are credible, industry-led groups that represent the interests of employers and workers covered by the OH&S Act and Regulations. Their commitment to health and safety in their industries are paramount to their success.

WorkplaceNL has also been advancing safety leadership through the CEO Safety Charter Program and through its educational programming. The CEO Safety Charter signatories advance the principle that safety is valued, shared, and personal. Signatories are proven leaders in safety performance and are willing to share their success with others. As ambassadors for safer workplaces, they

have demonstrated their commitment to preventing accidents and promoting health and safety in the workplace. They continue to improve health and safety practices and disability management within their organization, while encouraging full health and safety participation of all employees.

Effective safety leadership is typically viewed in terms of optimizing safety systems and conditions. Although this is important, safety leadership also involves managing “softer skills” for safety, including effective interpersonal communication. Strong safety leadership also requires effectively addressing employees’ behaviors and attitudes for safety.

Creating a safety culture requires a common vision and effort from everyone in an organization. There is a body of scientific research demonstrating that the management philosophy of an organization is the most important factor in determining its safety performance. For example, research demonstrates that companies with the lowest lost-time injury rates have the highest level of management commitment and employee involvement in safety.

We must advocate for safety that supports and maintains a positive culture as a part of daily operations. The actions and behaviours of supervisors represent the organization's safety culture. Therefore, it is critical that supervisors understand the organization's values and how to instill these values in the employees they lead on a daily basis.

We need to focus on safety coaching skills and management practices to demonstrate the importance of safety as a value.

Well-functioning OH&S Committees and WH&S Representatives/Designates also instill a safety culture in the workplace, and as an advisory committee, they play a leading role in reducing workplace injuries and illnesses.

## Objectives and opportunities

1

**Objective One** *Foster an environment to develop safety leadership in all levels of the organization.*

By 2017, WorkplaceNL will promote and help develop safety leadership within the workplace.

### Strategic opportunities:

1. Continue to foster the development of safety sector councils by promoting the systematic and effective management of health and safety through industry certification programs and industry training programs.
2. Provide forums for senior leaders to discuss health and safety.
3. Integrate senior business leaders into prevention programs and initiatives through the CEO Safety Charter Program by:
  - implementing a marketing plan to increase the engagement of senior leaders in OH&S; and
  - profiling business leaders who are innovative and successful at improving health and safety.
4. Educate supervisors and managers on their legislative roles, particularly in the internal responsibility system and due diligence.
5. Profile workers demonstrating safety leadership in WorkplaceNL's publications and social marketing ads.



## OUTCOME #2

### Preventing occupational disease

Traditionally, OH&S prevention efforts in the workplace have focused on more visible and apparent hazards - such as falls from heights or risks associated with electrical and fire hazards. However, the subject of preventing occupational disease is not a new concept. In fact, the International Labour Organization (ILO) held one of the first International Silicosis Conferences in 1930. Newfoundland and Labrador has also had a long history of occupational disease concerns among workers, particularly in the mining industry.

The burden of occupational diseases is often under-reported and the need for accurate and reliable data is critical for prevention efforts. Currently, a lack of knowledge related to occupational disease remains amongst stakeholders. Occupational diseases are difficult to diagnose, challenging to show an association with an exposure, and problematic to treat. Due to long latency periods, clinical manifestation of occupational diseases can occur after retirement and the association with the workplace may be overlooked. These are frustrating facts considering that the human and financial costs associated with occupational diseases are preventable.

Unfortunately, global trends show that the number of fatalities related to occupational disease surpasses those related to accidents and injuries. While well-known diseases and illnesses such as asbestosis, silicosis and noise-induced hearing loss have been addressed in the past, continued efforts for increasing the knowledge and awareness of lesser known diseases is important. Likewise, it is also important to increase awareness among industries where occupational disease occurrences have traditionally been less common. Occupational diseases may affect workers in any workplace, therefore, creating a need for broad education initiatives to ensure the protection of all workers in this province.

WorkplaceNL created the Strategy for the Prevention of Known Occupational Disease, 2011 – 2013 in collaboration with the OH&S Branch and in consultation with the NLFL and NLEC to increase awareness about known occupational disease in NL. Year 3 of that plan called for a formal evaluation to measure the impact of its efforts to increase education around preventing occupational disease between 2011 and 2013.

The evaluation found positive outcomes over the three year period, and provided recommendations for continued improvement that lead to an eventual decrease in the incidence of occupational disease. These recommendations are categorized in four themes: education, collaboration, Sector Council support and improved data quality.

2

## **Objective Two** *Monitor OH&S disease performance at a provincial, industry, and workplace level.*

By 2017, WorkplaceNL and the OH&S Branch will increase awareness about occupational disease and occupational disease risk factors.

### **Strategic opportunities:**

1. Expand knowledge and build awareness about occupational disease latency periods and links to previous exposure by:
  - continuing to promote and increase awareness of occupational disease within workplaces particularly among OH&S committee members;
  - ensuring occupational disease prevention is made relevant to individual occupations and workplaces;
  - incorporating information about occupational disease prevention in young worker education materials with particular attention placed on the high school curriculum;
  - exploring enhanced means of communication through radio, television and social media to reach current and retired workers; and
  - ensuring current information on occupational disease prevention is available through print and electronic material.
2. Explore new opportunities for collaboration on occupational disease prevention by:
  - reviewing the continued need and function of the provincial occupational disease working group;
  - continuing to meet with stakeholders including the NLFL, the NLEC, sector councils, industry associations, employers and workers to discuss the mortality and morbidity of known occupational diseases in the workplace.
3. Continue to provide support and resources to the sector councils regarding information on occupational disease development including risk factors by:
  - assisting them with the recognition of occupational diseases within their industry;

- providing them with detailed statistics on occupational disease claims within each industry and disseminating information to their stakeholders;
  - providing support based on a review of their training needs assessment and identifying which high-risk areas should be targeted for occupational disease prevention initiatives according to their individualized needs; and
  - requiring sector councils to incorporate preventing occupational disease into their strategic plan development as a consideration and condition for future funding.
4. Improve the data quality pertaining to occupational disease by:
    - continuing to resolve current data issues and data collection limitations through collaboration;
    - exploring methods for collecting occupational disease data relating to knowledge and awareness; and
    - establishing performance data indicators to measure success, impact and relevance of future occupational disease initiatives.
  5. Continue to educate health care personnel in identifying and managing occupational disease.
  6. Continue to translate current occupational disease research and incorporate the findings into the WorkplaceNL's educational programs and services.
  7. Continue to target efforts at industries and activities that pose a risk to worker health.



## OUTCOME #3

### Industry Collaboration and Partnerships

Trade unions, employer organizations, safety industry associations, and training organizations are the vehicles for helping individual workplaces improve their health and safety. They can often work together in providing advice, information, industry standards, training programs, and best practice examples.

Community engagement is also an important part of this outcome. Greater community awareness and concern about health and safety issues creates a positive and supportive climate for improvements in workplace health and safety. This should be a two-way flow of influence, as workplace health and safety issues can also have a positive effect on community and recreational safety practices.

**3**

**Objective Three** *Continue to support and develop health and safety programs and initiatives at the industry level.*

By 2017, WorkplaceNL and its partners will provide the necessary supports to continue advancing industry sector councils and industry-lead safety programs and initiatives.

## Strategic opportunities:

1. Collaborate with industry sector councils to:
  - develop and deliver sector-based training and educational initiatives;
  - develop and deliver certification training standards;
  - create safe-work practices for high-risk activities within the industry;
  - produce and promote industry safety publications and guidance material for significant health and safety issues;
  - involve them in WorkplaceNL's Annual Health and Safety Learning Symposium;
  - improve their knowledge and skills in occupational disease prevention; and
  - educate stakeholders on safety performance indicators to improve understanding of their meaning and relationship to the workplace.
2. Develop more effective processes for sharing data and information between stakeholders by:
  - using safety performance indicators to target high-risk workplaces;
  - implementing a new OH&S Committee Report Form to improve information on health hazards and safety hazards in workplaces;
  - implementing an online registration system for the Prevention Workshop Series that has the capability for participants to evaluate their learning; and
  - surveying workers annually to assess their awareness of OH&S.
  - surveying supervisors to measure their perception of safety risk.
3. Working with the RCMP, RNC, NLCSA, and Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to continue an awareness campaign on road safety in construction zones.
4. Work with industry safety associations to deliver education to students enrolled in the OH&S 3203 high school course.
5. Work with industry safety associations on the delivery of safety education through webinar technology.



## OUTCOME #4

### Education and certification training

Education and training play an important role in fostering a safety culture in the workplace, adopting safe work practices, and heightening awareness regarding hazards and risks. Training sessions ensure workers are compliant with safety requirements and competent to conduct high-risk work activities.

It is important to remember that safety education and training in the workplace is an employer's responsibility. Safety education and training are tools that help mitigate the risk for workplace injury and illness while at work. While the merits of safety education and training are well understood, they must be carried out on a continual basis

to ensure adequate worker protection from hazards systematically identified in the workplace. However, for workplace safety education to be effective and sustainable, it has to go beyond the mandatory requirements, and give workers a real learning experience. We have to

make workplace safety education engaging for all employees so that they retain the information. Safety training should be treated as a critical safety performance component rather than as a compliance issue.

4

**Objective Four** *Deliver workplace injury prevention education with a focus on preventing soft tissue injuries, preventing occupational disease and educating young workers.*

By 2017, WorkplaceNL and its partners will deliver educational sessions that lower the risks of exposure to soft tissue injuries and occupational health hazards, and educate young workers in safety principles and practices.

**Strategic opportunities:**

1. Leverage and prioritize educational initiatives based on needs by:
  - delivering targeted educational initiatives that address preventing, evaluating, and controlling known occupational disease and illness;
  - partnering with the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) to provide education to employers and workers on implementing the Global Harmonized System (GHS) when dealing with controlled products;
  - providing education on workplace violence and working alone;
  - targeting and increasing training of workers in identifying, evaluating and controlling ergonomic risk;
  - increasing webinar offerings to provide more educational opportunities to small and medium-sized enterprises; and
  - delivering an annual safety learning symposium for knowledge sharing, to recognize innovative approaches implemented by employers and workers, and to promote champions of workplace health and safety. The sessions will be delivered based on learning streams for workers, employers, and safety professionals.
2. Enhance certification standards by:
  - exploring the development of a provincial registry for all certification training required under the OH&S Act and Regulations;
  - implementing a refresher training program for OH&S Committee members; and
  - exploring the development of a certification training standard for supervisors and managers to improve knowledge, skill, and competency for OH&S in the workplace.
  - utilizing a train-the-trainer model where appropriate.
3. Educate OH&S Committees and Worker Health and Safety Representatives/Designates on ways to increase their effectiveness.

4. Continue to enhance the WORKPLACENL website with health and safety publications, videos, and learning materials.
5. Work with the Department of Education to promote/enhance awareness and education for young workers by:
  - implementing OH&S 3203 as a provincial course in the high school curriculum;
  - developing distance learning technologies into the OH&S 3203 high school course to increase enrollment of students in remote areas of the province;
  - providing support to teachers delivering OH&S 3203, Career Development 2201 and Skilled Trades in the high school system;
  - promoting industry safety associations to students enrolled in the OH&S 3203 high school course.
  - continuing to collaborate and partner with the Department of Education to promote and deliver “SAFE Work NL’s - Who Wants to Save a Life?” game show to schools across the province;
  - continuing to promote SAFE Work NL’s Radio and Video Contest and award annual prizes to students;
  - continuing to partner with Skills Canada to promote and heighten awareness about workplace health and safety at all provincial Skills Canada competitions
  - encouraging awareness of OH&S in post-secondary school programs; raise awareness about workplace health and safety and workers’ rights, using social media; and
  - continuing to promote the “Health and Safety Educator of the Year” Award.
6. In partnership with industry safety associations, promote a provincial Musculoskeletal Injury Prevention Week to create awareness of MSI’s in the workplace and their impact on workers and employers.
7. Educate employers and workers on the importance of hiring competent OH&S professionals when completing training and program development.
8. Explore developing a voluntary certification standard for musculoskeletal injury prevention.
9. Develop educational material on road safety in construction zones.



## OUTCOME #5

### OH&S programs and systems

A health and safety management system ensures that there is a comprehensive health and safety program implemented and functioning. This ensures workers and workplaces are safe and secure from injury, illness and

disease by identifying, assessing, and controlling the risks. The scope and complexity of the management system vary according to the type of workplace and the nature of business.

By 2017, WorkplaceNL and the OH&S Branch will work in partnership to evaluate OH&S programs and systems implemented in workplaces to ensure compliance with the OH&S Act and Regulations.

### Strategic opportunities:

1. Assist with the effective functioning of OH&S programs and systems by:
  - providing employers and workers with education and guidance in implementing effective OH&S programs in their workplace;
  - promoting and recognizing the benefits of effective, productive OHS Committees in the workplace;
  - assessing the effectiveness of OH&S Committees through monitoring to determine if identified risks been appropriately addressed in a timely manner;
  - providing OH&S Committees/WH&S Representatives/Designates with support, resources, and practical tools;
  - educating employers on the benefits of PRIME as an incentive system to improve workplace health and safety.
  - promoting a health and safety social media network for information sharing among employers and workers.
  - auditing employer OH&S programs, particularly those employers with increased risk of frequency of injury.
  - strategically inspecting employers with higher risk of injury.
  - Educating employers and workers on the differences between an OH&S program and an OH&S System.



## OUTCOME #6

### Enforcement practices

The OH&S Branch of Service NL remains dedicated to ensuring that enforcement functions are carried out in an equitable, practical and consistent manner. The effectiveness of legislation in protecting employees is crucially dependant on the ongoing compliance of those regulated with these requirements. One of the biggest ongoing undertakings

of the Branch is to enhance the OH&S enforcement presence in workplaces; increasing our physical presence not only serves to reinforce our mandate, but also encourages ongoing compliance and promotes the general culture of workplace safety. The OH&S Branch recognizes that most employers want to comply with the legislation,

so we are mindful of clearly communicating with individuals and businesses what is required so as to assist them in meeting their legal obligations without unnecessary expense. Our aim is to provide information in an open and transparent manner. However, where warranted, firm action including prosecution will be taken against those individuals and businesses who fail to co-operate or irresponsibly put workers at risk of injury by contravening minimum regulatory requirements.

Regulatory leadership involves the implementation of good enforcement management practices. Enforcement management practices are demonstrated by interpreting and applying the law; consistency in approach; openness to the provision of information internally and externally; standards that communicate the desired course of action; and monitoring that provides accountability for enforcement action. All these factors contribute to securing compliance. By committing to a continued effort to improving and enhancing the enforcement management process,

the OH&S Branch maintains consistency in enforcement activity, and in turn increases compliance to the legislation within the province.

Further, to support the prevention framework, the OH&S Branch and WorkplaceNL will continue to collaborate, coordinate and seek out ways to work effectively together and with employers, union organizations, industry associations, and other key stakeholders. Through this cooperative arrangement, we can ensure that accurate information is collected and disseminated and that enforcement resources are deployed utilizing a risk based approach. The most meaningful way to improve workplace health and safety on a grand scale is through a concentrated, collaborative, and coordinated effort. The OH&S Branch, through the enforcement program, promotes safe work practices and standards in workplaces throughout the province.

6

**Objective Six** *Work with stakeholders to establish, promote and enforce safe workplace practices, standards and procedures.*

By 2017, the OH&S Branch will continue to enhance its enforcement management process and operational efficiency, through the implementation of new strategies that utilize risk management approaches and by continuing to foster stakeholder collaboration and communication.

### **Strategic opportunities:**

1. Develop and implement enforcement strategies that are representative of the risks in each sector and that highlight identified areas of focus.
2. Continue to strengthen the Branch's proactive approach to the inspection program by determining a priority inspection list for each industry sector.
3. Continue to improve on data collection and exchange of information with WorkplaceNL and share relevant enforcement data with sector safety councils, safety organizations and key industry and labour stakeholders.
4. Develop content for hazard alerts, communications, and information on a timely basis to ensure that stakeholders are aware of the risks and have current knowledge and information to reduce accidents and incidents.
5. Continue to enhance the Branch's programs and resources in the prevention of known occupational disease through the development and implementation of targeted enforcement strategies.

6. Continue in the enhancement and implementation of policies and programs that aid officers in effective and efficient enforcement activity.
7. Continue to enhance the Branch's planning, monitoring, and reporting of enforcement activity.
8. Publish online the prosecutions that resulted in guilty verdicts to enhance stakeholder understanding of enforcement and the application of OH&S legislation.



## Moving forward

As we move to implementing this new workplace injury and illness prevention plan, we are optimistic that employers, workers, and all of our safety partners will continue to engage in and have conversations about improving OH&S.

In order to keep workers safe, and to control hazards in the workplace, we must advance a clear, evidence-based plan that encourages stakeholders to take action. While few people would argue with the safety performance over the past decade, we recognize that advancing health and safety over the next decade will require increased commitment, investment, and best practice programming. There are no simple solutions, and all stakeholders must seriously consider the future direction of workplace injury prevention in our province.

This plan must be implemented in cooperation with stakeholders, and we all must fully accept our responsibilities to prevent injuries. We must respond to the current health and safety climate. WorkplaceNL and the OH&S Branch look forward to working with our stakeholders to advance occupational health and safety in our province.



**St. John's Office**

146-148 Forest Road, P.O. Box 9000, St. John's, NL A1A 3B8

t 709.778-1000 f 709.738.1714 t 1.800.563.9000

**Grand Falls-Windsor Office**

26 High Street, P.O. Box 850, Grand Falls-Windsor, NL A2A 2P7

t 709.489.1600 f 709.489.1616 t 1.800.563.3448

**Corner Brook Office**

Suite 201B, Millbrook Mall, 2 Herald Avenue, P.O. Box 474, Corner Brook, NL A2H 6E6

t 709.637.2700 f 709.639.1018 t 1.800.563.2772

w [workplacnl.ca](http://workplacnl.ca)

---