

Working at Heights Training Standard:

An update from Chief Prevention Officer **George Gritziotis**



George Gritziotis,
Chief Prevention Officer

George Gritziotis became Ontario's first Chief Prevention Officer (CPO) and Associate Deputy Minister in 2011. As CPO, he has the following responsibilities:

- To establish a provincial occupational health and safety strategy.
- To provide the minister with a report on the performance of Ontario's occupational health and safety system each year.
- To promote the alignment of prevention activities among all workplace health and safety system partners.
- To provide advice on preventing occupational injuries and illnesses.
- To advise on proposed changes for the funding and delivery of prevention services.

- To work with Ontario's Health and Safety Associations (HSAs) to establish effective delivery of prevention programs and services.
- To monitor the HSAs' compliance with standards set by the minister.

As CPO, he also has the authority to set standards for health and safety training, including the new training standard for working at heights.

Recently, IHSA discussed the new [Working at Heights Training Standard](#) with Mr. Gritziotis. He gave us his thoughts about the changes coming to Ontario for workers who encounter fall hazards on the job.

In your opinion, why does Ontario need a standard for working at heights training?

QUESTION ONE

Unfortunately, falls in the workplace continue to be a significant cause of injury and death despite heightened enforcement and awareness campaigns. Training is one of the key elements in keeping our workers safe. This standard will support consistent and quality working at heights training programs that are available to all workers and employers in Ontario.

Developing a standard for fall protection training for workers at heights is one of the priority actions in our recently released integrated occupational health and safety strategy, which is to ensure that workers who are at most risk receive the support they need. It's also one of the priority recommendations in the Report of the Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety. The bottom line is that this is an important step in creating a quality health and safety training system, especially for high-hazard activities.

How do you think this will impact front-line workers? How will it affect employers?

QUESTION TWO

The most obvious and important impact is that it will provide workers with the safety competencies needed to ensure that they can do their jobs safely and return home healthy after every shift.

At a workplace level, training programs that meet the standard will provide workers with fundamental knowledge and skills, including practical hands-on training in the use of common personal fall protection systems. It will also strengthen the safety culture within workplaces where workers work at heights.

For employers, it will provide quality and consistent baseline training for their workforce, which can ultimately lead to better productivity and a more competitive firm. It can also be used as a foundation on which to provide additional site-specific and equipment-specific training.

How much did stakeholder feedback play a part in the creation of the standard? Who was represented?

QUESTION THREE

Stakeholder participation and feedback are the basis of the standard. The content was developed and recommended by a committee of industry representatives from various sectors. The committee included employers, organized labour, health and safety experts, and system partners. To ensure that as many voices as possible contributed throughout the development process, we engaged a wide cross-section of stakeholders from sectors not represented on the committee, and have incorporated the feedback we received. This was a truly representative initiative.

What will training providers have to do in order to meet the standard, and how will employers know which providers meet the standard?

QUESTION FOUR

Providers will need to align their training delivery and curriculum to ensure that they meet the standard. Although baseline training in working at heights must be achieved, training providers could tailor their curriculum to meet the specific needs of their sector, as long as the learning requirements are met.

The Ministry has released a draft [Working at Heights Training Provider Standard](#), which specifies the delivery and administrative requirements that training providers would need to meet in order to be approved to deliver working at heights training to Ontario workers.

There are actually two standards coming into play. Why is that?

QUESTION FIVE

The [Working at Heights Training Program Standard](#) specifies the training program requirements, including such items as specific learning outcomes for learners, equipment to be used for the training, and minimum length of the course.

The [Working at Heights Training Provider Standard](#) addresses the delivery requirements, including instructor and evaluator qualifications and administrative requirements for training providers.

The eventual goal is to have the providers of working at heights training programs meet both Program and Provider standards.

Will this impact any existing regulations, or will it trigger the creation of new regulations?

QUESTION SIX

New regulatory requirements would have to be in place in order to make training programs that meet the [Working at Heights Training Program Standard](#) mandatory.

How will you measure the success of the implementation of the standard in the short and long term?

QUESTION SEVEN

The goal of implementing the new standards and all other related activities is to reduce workplace injuries and fatalities due to falls from heights. We will be working with the system partners on an ongoing basis to monitor the outcomes of any training, IHSA seminars on falls, blitz enforcement activities, and other outreach. To do this, we will put in place a performance measurement framework that will demonstrate the impact of all activities.

In addition, we'll be looking at the number of workers receiving training that meets the new standards, as well as at feedback from workers and stakeholders in terms of improvement in the overall level of knowledge and skill and in the safety culture.

