

Working at Heights
Training Standard:

History and background



Ontario's Ministry of Labour (MOL) has released a provincial standard on working at heights training for Ontario workplaces. This standard specifies who must receive working at heights training and what they must learn from the training.

Why is there a need?

Falls are a major cause of injury and death in Ontario workplaces. The vast majority of these falls are from heights. In Ontario, employers are required to provide fall protection training to workers who will be exposed to fall hazards.

The new standard was a recommendation of the Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety that was led by Tony Dean in 2010. The Ontario government accepted all the recommendations made by the panel. The Working at Heights Training Program Standard responds to Recommendation 17: Development of mandatory fall protection training for workers who work at heights.

Who helped develop the standard?

The standard was developed by the MOL with input from representatives of various sectors, including employers, organized labour, health and safety experts, and prevention system partners. The members of the Working at Heights Training Program Standard Development Group contributed their time and expertise to the development of the standard on a volunteer basis.

The committee comprised the following industry and labour representatives:

- Blair Allin, International Brotherhood of Boilermakers
- Ed Braithwaite, C&C Enterprises Electrical Construction
- Kevin Bryenton, Ironworkers District Council of Ontario
- Mike Cuzzetto, Loblaw Companies Limited
- Glen Drewes, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
- Jamie Hansen, UNIFOR Canada
- Jim LaFontaine, Dufferin Construction
- Janice Klenot, United Food and Commercial Workers
- Daniel Rajschmir, IPEX Management
- Gordon Sproule, Sproule Specialty Roofing
- Dave Trumble, Power Workers' Union
- Rick Van Ihinger, Clifford Masonry

What is covered in the standard?

This standard specifies what must be learned by the participants in a working at heights training program. The standard requires training to have two modules. The first covers the basic theory of working at heights and must be at least three hours long. The second is a practical component that covers the use of equipment. It must be at least three and a half hours long. The standard includes learning outcomes, length and method of instruction, and evaluation methods for working at heights training programs.

As a hazard-based standard, the Working at Heights Training Program Standard is intended to protect those who may be exposed to the danger of falling from heights; it provides for the development of curricula about fall hazards and general safety practices for working at heights.

Workers who use travel-restraint systems, fall-restricting systems, fall-arrest systems, or safety nets are expected to take the training described in the standard. The training will be valid for three years after successful completion of the two modules.

A second standard—the Working at Heights Training Provider Standard—has been released for comment by stakeholders. It includes criteria for delivering working at heights training programs, processes for reviewing and approving training providers (and instructors), and requirements for record keeping and reporting.

Is the standard mandatory?

The standard will not become mandatory until a consultation process on amending the regulations has been completed. Compliance will be required when the regulatory amendments come into effect. Initially, these amendments will affect firms that operate under the construction regulations (O. Reg. 213/91). Later, it will be phased in to other sectors.

Draft standard devised by system partners helped shape today's standard

Health and safety training standards are not a new concept. Some provinces already have them, and those provinces have seen their injury rates drop as a result. Newfoundland and Labrador is one example, and IHSA members heard from that province at last year's Annual General Meeting.

The Working at Heights Training Standard is a result of collaboration between system partners and industry stakeholders. IHSA played a large role in a system-developed draft standard in 2010 that was used as the basis for IHSA's own *Working at Heights* program. Like the new standard, the original draft contained two components—in-class knowledge and hands-on application.

The 2010 draft standard was provided to the new Working Group for reference and use. "There is greater buy-in, acceptance, and ownership when all stakeholders are involved. The new standard is an excellent example of this—where system partners and industry stakeholders all contributed to its creation," says Enzo Garritano, Vice President of Research and Stakeholder Relations at IHSA.