

# Big impact on a high hazard

## Ontario's strategy to eliminate falls from heights

Last year we saw the introduction of new training requirements for workers who use fall protection systems. A Working at Heights Training Standard was put in place by Ontario's Prevention Office as part of its strategy to change the tragic circumstances associated with working at heights.

Standardized training was a way to ensure that all workers learned to work safely at heights. It also helped increase awareness of the hazard and encouraged construction workers and their employers to make working at heights a safety priority.

Since the new training became mandatory on April 1, 2015, over 100,000 workers have been trained and Chief Prevention Officer (CPO), George Gritziotis, says that this is just the beginning. "This is a transformational initiative, something that we'll be analyzing over a long period of time."

Although it's too early to establish an accurate and objective analysis of the trends, CPO Gritziotis is making sure that the importance of this initiative is being communicated as widely as possible.

*The conversation around working at heights is at an all-time high, and not just among the trainers and the system partners. Contractors both large and small are aware and know it's the law and they're looking at ensuring that they're in compliance with the law. So this has been a tremendous way to impact a high hazard.*

Through a multi-pronged approach that includes the continuation of radio advertising, a residential campaign targeting roofers, and residential enforcement blitzes, every effort is being made to lower the risk of this high hazard work activity.

And although the awareness that has been achieved through this campaign is encouraging, CPO Gritziotis is quick to point out that it's not just about raising

awareness and reducing the injuries and deaths caused by falls from heights.

The ultimate goal of all of these coordinated campaigns is to put an end to falls from heights across all sectors, not just construction.

*Through our operations side, we're going to be coordinating 20 targeted fall inspection blitzes between May and June, focusing not just on falls in construction—we're also going to be looking at industrial workplaces and mining workplaces as well.*

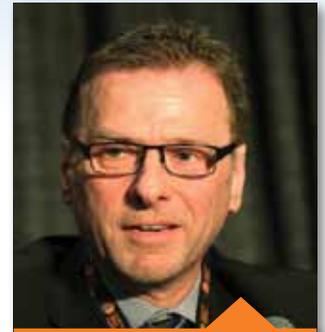
The unfortunate reality behind this massive undertaking is that the message is still not getting through to those who are most at risk.

Last year in Ontario, 10 construction workers died from falls. That's more than half the total number of fatalities for the entire construction sector (17 construction workers died in 2015).\*

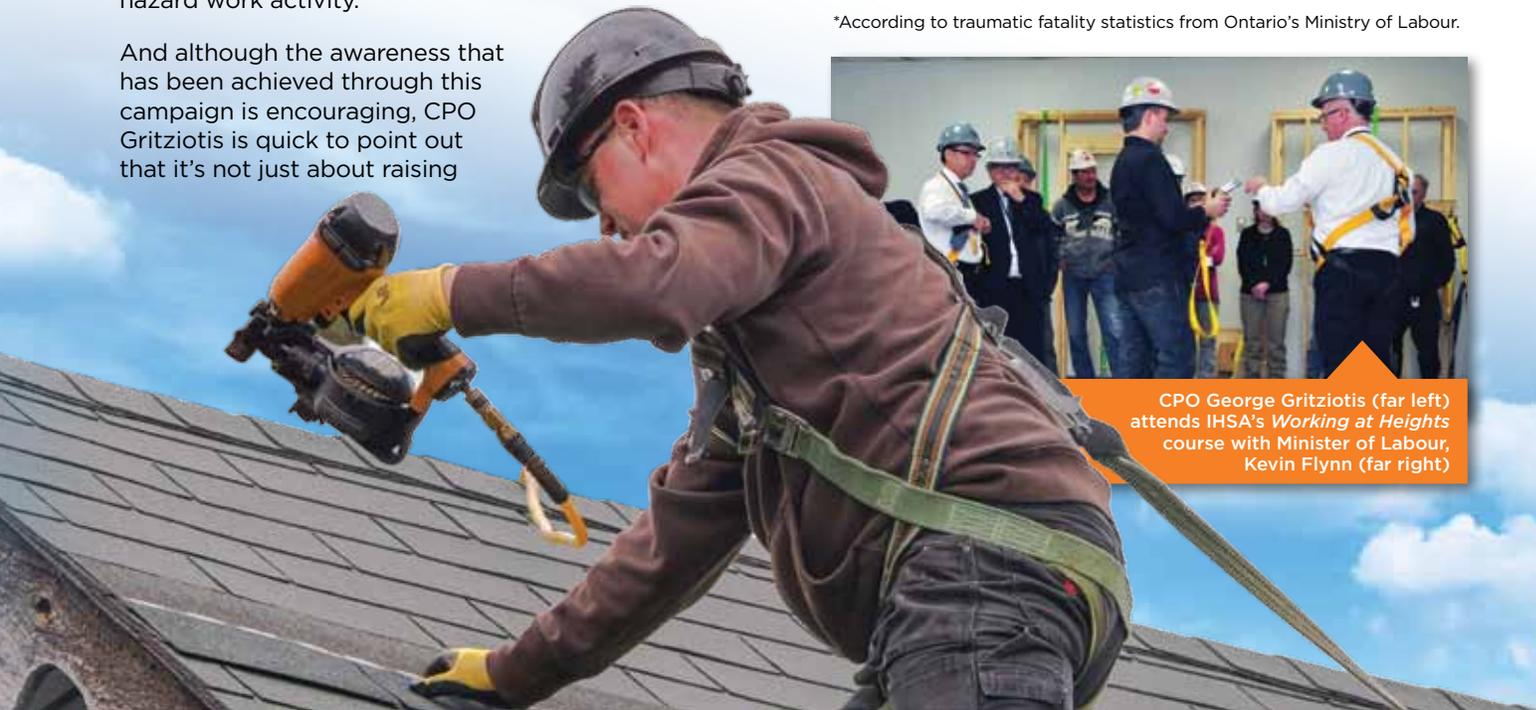
With numbers like that, coupled with the devastation caused by any workplace fatality, you can be sure that the Prevention Office will continue to make fall prevention a focal point of its health and safety strategy.

*The data is what drives it. We know that for construction, tragically, falls are one of the biggest reasons why a worker is injured, or will lose their life. And when we look across all sectors, not just construction, it's in the top three! So it will continue to be a priority until we eliminate it as a cause of injury or fatality.*

\*According to traumatic fatality statistics from Ontario's Ministry of Labour.



George Gritziotis  
Chief Prevention Officer



CPO George Gritziotis (far left) attends IHSA's Working at Heights course with Minister of Labour, Kevin Flynn (far right)