



Spring into

# Spring

start-up

Now that winter is behind us and spring is finally here, IHSA member firms are ramping up their activity at worksites, in warehouses, and on roadways across Ontario. This includes construction trades, utility workers, and aggregate firms whose work can often be weather dependent. That creates more opportunity for workplace injuries as new workers come on board and workloads increase.

Spring is a great time to check that your health and safety procedures are in place, your vehicles and equipment are working properly, site or workplace orientations are complete, your workers are trained and ready, and the jobsite is safe.

## Policies and procedures

Your health and safety policy and program must be reviewed at least once a year (*Occupational Health and Safety Act*, s. 25 (2)). Check to see if any regulations specifically applicable to the type of work you do have changed. If you revise the policy and program, don't forget to tell your workers about the changes.

Use the following checklist to make sure you have covered some of the basics:

- A Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) or health and safety representative has been appointed.
- Designated first aiders have been chosen.
- Worker training has been scheduled to take place before the work begins.
- Workers and subcontractors have been instructed on site-specific jobsite hazards and emergency procedures.
- Workers have the personal protective equipment (PPE) required by the company and the regulations.
- Start-up and maintenance procedures follow safe work practices.

## Vehicles and equipment

Inspect vehicles and equipment and make sure everything is in good working order. They may not have been used over the winter or may have been damaged by ice and snow. Some best practices include the following:

- Exhaust systems have been checked for leaks or blockages from nesting animals. (Diesel exhaust can damage the lungs and cause cancer.)

- Manufacturers' instructions, operators' manuals, and maintenance logs are available on the equipment.
- Operators are qualified and competent to operate the vehicles and equipment safely.
- Procedures are in place for safely unloading equipment or material from delivery vehicles.
- Items such as PPE, lifelines, lanyards, and ropes (including wire rope) have been inspected.

## Jobsite conditions

Water is everywhere in the spring, so the site may be slippery and soil conditions may have changed. Be sure you are following these correct procedures for dealing with wet conditions on site.

- A housekeeping system that includes controls for mud and water will be followed (e.g., walkways will be provided where necessary).
- Ground-fault circuit interrupters will be used when electrical equipment is operated outside or in wet conditions.
- Soil stability will be tested before heavy equipment is set up.
- Soil stability will be tested before beginning any trenching activities.
- Trenches will be properly sloped or shored, or workers will be protected by a trench box.

## Workers

Workers may have been less active over the winter. That makes them more prone to injury when their physical workload increases. It is important to be prepared and in shape both mentally and physically when the work begins.

It's also a good idea to remind them about health and safety requirements on the site by making sure they can answer "Yes" to the following questions:

- Are you familiar with the company's health and safety policy and program?

- Do you know the names of your health and safety representative or JHSC members and the designated first aiders?
- Do you know your rights and responsibilities and the procedure for reporting unsafe working conditions?
- Have you been properly trained for the work you will be doing?
- Are you familiar with the jobsite, its hazards, and the emergency response procedures?
- Are you familiar with the equipment you will be using, its hazards, and how to use it safely?
- Are you aware of the hazards of heavy equipment? (e.g., have changing soil conditions created additional hazards?)
- Have you checked your PPE, tools, and equipment? If they were defective or degraded, did you inform your supervisor that they need to be repaired or replaced?
- Have you prepared your body for the work ahead? (e.g., did you do warm-up exercises before starting work and use good ergonomic techniques to reduce the strain on your body?)

By having your workers answer those questions, you will help ensure that they are not only well-prepared for spring start-up but also on their way to a safe and healthy year.



## IHSA resources

Visit IHSA's **Policy and Program Templates** section at [ihsa.ca](http://ihsa.ca). There you'll find useful resources that you can customize to suit your needs:

- Sample health and safety policies
- Safe work practices and job procedures
- Tool and equipment maintenance checklists
- PPE checklists
- Training and orientation checklists
- Workplace inspection checklists

You will find these and other templates in the **Resources** section of the website.

