

# MOL to focus on **MSDs** in the new year

In February, the Ministry of Labour (MOL) will conduct a month-long inspection blitz on musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) in the workplace. The blitz will concentrate on manual material handling, especially in the residential and ICI construction sectors. By taking steps to reduce the risks of MSD injuries now, your company can be prepared for the upcoming inspection.

MSDs are injuries of the muscles, nerves, tendons, ligaments, joints, cartilage, or spinal discs. They can be caused by forceful exertion, awkward body positions, hand-arm and whole-body vibration, contact stress, and repetitive tasks. MSDs often take time to develop and can lead to chronic back pain, shoulder problems, carpal tunnel syndrome, etc. Workers with these kinds of injuries may just have to take a couple of days off work, or they may end up with a long-term disability.

Although musculoskeletal injuries have become less frequent across Ontario, they are still happening in several sectors. In 2009, MSDs accounted for 900,000 days lost and more than 28,000 Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) claims worth a total of over \$111 million. Not only do these injuries cost companies money, but they also cost workers a lot of pain and suffering.

## Implement **MSD** controls

To reduce musculoskeletal injuries at your workplace, you need to recognize, assess, and control the hazards. Incorporate the proper procedures and best practices to control MSDs into your company's health and safety program. These controls should be specific to the type of work you do. In general however, they can include the following.

**1** Use material-handling equipment such as carts, dollies, pallet jacks, or manual forklifts when possible.

**2** Avoid lifting a load from the floor by storing objects above standing knuckle height and below standing shoulder height.

**3** Working on the floor usually requires kneeling and bending your back forward. When possible, raise the work height by using a workbench.

**4** Minimize work above the shoulder. Muscles in your shoulders and arms fatigue more quickly than those in your back and legs.

**5** Make more trips with lighter loads. Moving smaller weights more frequently puts less stress on your back than moving larger weights.

**6** Implement an exercise program. It can help prevent MSDs and promote general good health.

It's always important to evaluate the effectiveness of these controls once they have been implemented.

## How **IHSA** can help

IHSA offers several free tip sheets which outline the musculoskeletal hazards and controls for many of the construction trades that will be covered by the MOL blitz. These helpful tip sheets look at several activities that are common in each trade, the risks posed by those activities, and controls for reducing the possibility of injury. For these and other helpful resources, visit the *Musculoskeletal Disorders & Ergonomics* topic page on our website.

IHSA also offers a variety of ergonomic consultant services that can help you find individual solutions to trade-specific problems. To find your IHSA consultant, click the "Consulting" tab on our website.

