

There's so much to gain by joining a Safety Group

As a business owner, you're always looking for ways to improve your bottom line. As an employer who cares about his employees, you also want to make sure that everyone gets home safe at the end of the day. If there was a simple way to do both those things, wouldn't you jump at the chance? If you haven't joined one of IHSA's Safety Groups, then you're missing out on a great opportunity.

What is the Safety Groups program?

Safety Groups is a program administered by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). Each Safety Group is made up of companies in the same industry that have joined in order to share their health and safety experience and resources and help one another improve their prevention systems. It also provides great networking opportunities.

Each Safety Group has a sponsor that oversees the group, organizes meetings and leadership workshops, offers guidance on action plans, and keeps track of the group's achievements and goals. IHSA currently sponsors three Safety Groups: Construction Safety Group, Electrical and Utilities Safety Group, and Transportation Safety Group. IHSA has also joined forces with PSHSA, WSN, and WSPS to sponsor a Northern Ontario Safety Group, beginning in 2012.

Who should join?

If you are a new firm or a small firm that is still establishing its health and safety systems, Safety Groups is an ideal program for you. It's an opportunity to learn from other businesses that are operating in the same industry and region. If you are a well-established company that is doing a review or audit of your current systems, Safety Groups is a great way for you to compare your operations with others in your industry and align them with the best industry practices. The end result is a safer industry overall, and that's good for everyone.

What are the benefits?

Each Safety Group focuses on five key areas and is rewarded for making improvements in those areas. However, there are no penalties if the group does not

succeed. The WSIB treats each Safety Group as one large company, and it rewards the success of the group as a whole with rebates for each member. The rebates are on top of any of the firms' standard experience-rating rewards.

But there is more to Safety Groups than financial rebates. A survey found that participants received many other benefits from the program. They included

- fewer lost-time injuries and a significantly lower severity rate than for firms not in the program
- the knowledge, skills, and motivation to recognize health and safety problems and initiate solutions
- improved employee perception and understanding of workplace health and safety.

What results can you expect to see?

The 2010 results of the Safety Groups program, which the WSIB recently announced, are remarkable. Forty-two Safety Groups in Ontario will share rebates of over \$38 million this year.

The groups sponsored by IHSA did particularly well. The Electrical and Utilities Safety Group reduced its injury frequency by 20 per cent and its injury severity by 30 per cent. This group was 100 per cent successful in meeting the goals that it established at the beginning of the year, and thus it received the maximum rebate of six per cent, which amounted to \$528,000.

The Transportation Safety Group reduced its injury frequency by 10 per cent and its injury severity by 12 per cent. These reductions, coupled with an 84 per cent success rate in meeting its goals, earned the group a 5.39 per cent rebate, which amounted to more than \$4 million.

Since this was the first year for the Construction Safety Group, its results will not be available until next year.

How do you join?

For more information on Safety Groups, including how to become part of the program, visit the Safety Groups page on IHSA's website. It doesn't matter whether your company is large or small, or what your safety record is. What matters is your commitment to improve. Act soon because the deadline to join a Safety Group for next year is December 15. You don't want to let an opportunity like this slip through your hands.

