

IHSA's Labour-Management Network aims to make high-hazard work safer

Every year, more than 800 people volunteer their time to help make Ontario's high-hazard workplaces safer. They work all over the province and in many trades and sectors in an effort to make a difference. In fact, they are the only volunteer body of their kind in North America. These individuals make up IHSA's Labour-Management Network.

The Network consists of the Provincial Labour-Management Health and Safety Committee for Construction, the Provincial Labour-Management Safety Committee for Electrical and Utilities, 16 regional committees, and 26 construction trade or sector committees.

The two provincial committees often take a province-wide or industry perspective. Both committees are recognized under Section 21 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* as advisors to the Minister of Labour. These committees have a long history of bringing together representatives of government, labour, and management to improve workplace safety in Ontario's construction, electrical, and utility sectors. Through them, members of the Labour-Management Network participate in developing, reviewing, and commenting on provincial regulations, industry standards, guidelines, and best practices.

Creating and reviewing technical documents, regulations, and standards is just one of the ways the Network helps to improve health and safety in the construction and utility industries. The committees are also very active in community outreach. They raise awareness of health and safety among local businesses with workers who perform high-hazard activities, such as working at heights, working with high-voltage electricity, and working with dangerous goods. With support from IHSA committee members, they often collaborate with employer associations, colleges and universities, and other groups to spread the safety message.

Here are a few examples of what some of the Labour-Management Committees are currently working on to mitigate the risks of high-hazard activities.

Technical manuals and best practices

The **Roofers Committee** wrote a series of four health and safety pamphlets, two of which deal with working at heights: *Roofers Safety Pamphlet* (IHSA010) and *Hiring a Roofing Contractor* (IHSA023). They also wrote a *Low Slope Roofing Manual* (M070). These publications are available to order or download at ihsa.ca.

In addition, a sub-committee is finalizing a guideline for working safely on and in proximity to photovoltaic systems (solar panels).



The **Hamilton Committee** recently created a sample health and safety policy and safety talk on the distraction caused by using cell phones and other mobile devices while on a worksite. The sample policy and safety talk are available to download on ihsa.ca, and much of the information is included in the "Mobile devices in the workplace" article on pages 18-19.

The **Building Code Working Group** has been working diligently on a formal submission to request changes to the Ontario Building Code that would help protect workers from falling from heights. These changes are:

- Lowering the requirement for permanent roof anchors from 8 m to 3 m in order to meet the requirements of section 26 of the Construction Regulation (O. Reg. 213/91)
- Raising the height and strength requirements of parapet walls to act as permanent guardrails

- Installing permanent ladder hooks on buildings to help secure portable ladders
- Using guardrails or screens to prevent workers from falling through skylights.

The **Service Sector Committee** has developed a Service Sector Web Tool for those involved in service, repair, and retrofit work. Located at ihsa.ca/service_sector, it provides free information about responsibilities, liabilities, hazards, and proper procedures for various types of work commonly encountered in the service sector. It's a key resource for owners, property managers, and contractors.

The **Boilermakers Committee** has produced a detailed *Boilermakers Health and Safety Manual* (M074), which deals with high-hazard activities such as working at heights and working in confined spaces. The manual will be available in early 2015.

The **Mining and Aggregates Sector Working Group** has completed an update of the *Mining and Aggregates Safe Work Practices. Safe Work Practices for the Aggregates Industry* (M075) covers topics such as fall prevention, explosives and blasting, and operating bulldozers and haulage trucks.

The **Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Committee** has developed a trade-specific manual that covers the hazards associated with working at heights, electrical safety, and driving service vehicles. It is expected to be printed in early 2015. In addition, they successfully appealed for changes to the Canadian Electrical Code (CEC) to protect mechanics servicing rooftop HVAC units, and they continue to press for more changes.

The **ECAO/IBEW Committee** is working on updating their pocket-sized health and safety manual (M010). A new version will be available in the new year.

The **Elevator/Escalator Committee** is near completion of an advisory for working in proximity to transmission towers, which can be used by all trades.

The **Sprinkler Committee** has been instrumental in effecting changes to the upcoming CSA standard on mobile elevating work platforms.

The **Concrete Floor Committee** has been working on a manual about high-hazard activities in their trade.

Training and awareness

The **Timmins Committee** is planning their next health and safety conference. They have been doing this for the past few years with great success. The event brings together construction labour and management in the Timmins region for information sessions on high-hazard activities such as working at heights.

The **Northwestern Committee** is in the final stages of getting a distracted driving awareness campaign off the ground. The committee members worked with local sponsors and IHSA to create the campaign, which will be featured on Thunder Bay city buses.

The **Insulators Committee** presented a Health and Safety Training Day for insulators. The event offered awareness training on the hazards specific to insulators. Over the past two years, more than 1,600 workers have taken the training.

The **London Committee** participated in Fanshawe College's Health and Safety Day. The goal was to reach young workers who are considering a career in construction. Committee members provided information on high-hazard activities to some 700 students.

The **Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) Committee** organized a health and safety seminar that focused on working at heights. The seminar included awareness training and practical demonstrations of the effects a fall has on equipment such as lanyards, energy absorbers, and self-retracting lifelines.

The **Toronto Committee** conducted a hands-on fall protection training demonstration at Voyager Court (pictured below).

Get involved

The activities outlined here represent just some of the tireless efforts by the dedicated volunteers of IHSA's Labour-Management Network. If you want to become a part of protecting the health and safety of workers in Ontario, simply send an email to Imadmin@ihsa.ca and let them know. You can join a committee or simply voice your opinion. If you have an idea or know of an opportunity for them to help spread the safety message, they'd be glad to hear from you. To learn more about the Network, visit the **Committees** section of ihsa.ca

