



# THE EMPLOYERS'Edge BULLETIN

## APRIL 1<sup>st</sup> SAFETY BLITZ TARGETS ONTARIO WORKPLACES

In April, The Ministry of Labour will focus its safety blitz efforts on hazards involving musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs).

MSDs are injuries and disorders of the muscles, tendons and nerves. They can develop as a result of ongoing exposure to such things as repetitive work, forceful exertions such as heavy lifting and carrying, awkward postures and vibrating equipment that can affect the bones, joints, ligaments and other soft tissues.

The blitz will target workplaces in the construction, healthcare, industrial and mining sectors.

Inspectors will concentrate on tasks that require workers to exert force in lifting, pushing or carrying items and tasks that put workers in awkward postures or are repetitive.

MSDs can occur in any type of workplace. The Ministry of Labour states that they account for 43 per cent of all lost-time injuries in Ontario. In 2007 this amounted to:

- more than 35,000 injured workers
- a loss of more than 1.2 million working days; and
- more than \$133 million in medical and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) costs.

### BLITZ FOCUS

In general, the focus will depend on the type of workplace being inspected. Inspectors will pay particular attention to tasks requiring workers to use their muscles to exert force to lift, push or carry items. These tasks will be identified through an analysis of types of workplaces known to have high frequencies of MSD injuries and hazards.

Inspectors will take action if they find contraventions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations. This may include issuing orders and/or laying charges under the Act.

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## PRIORITIES

Inspectors will focus on the following key priorities for each sector:

- **Construction Sector:** Inspectors will blitz the homebuilding sector, giving special attention to low-rise “forms” (structures into which concrete is poured). They will look for tasks such as the carrying, erecting and stripping of forms. Inspectors will also review with employers in the homebuilding trades the risks associated with the use of vibrating hand tools.
- **Healthcare Sector:** Inspectors will focus their field visits on retirement and nursing homes, paying particular attention to the tasks of lifting, transferring and repositioning of residents. They will check written policies and procedures, training and supervision involving these tasks. They will also check whether assistive devices such as equipment for patient lifting, transferring and repositioning are properly maintained.
- **Industrial Sector:** Inspectors will focus on retail food sales establishments (i.e. grocery stores). In particular, inspectors will focus on tasks involving the handling of products. These tasks will include the receiving of products, how they are stored on racks, ease of access to all products in walk-in refrigerators/freezers and how products are transported throughout the store. Inspectors will also check cashiers’ work stations. Inspectors will check written policies and procedures, training and supervision involving these tasks.
- **Mining Sector:** Inspectors will focus on the safe handling of long hole, diamond and rock drills, jacklegs and stoppers and associated supplies. They will also review control measures being used to reduce the risk associated with vibrating hand tools.

Crawford Chondon & Partners LLP will continue to keep you updated on Occupational Health and Safety initiatives.