

NEWS RELEASE

Attention Business/News Editors

WSIB to Implement New Rules for Construction Sector

TORONTO, September 18, 2008 – New rules that are part of an industry-led effort to help injured/ill construction workers get back to work came into force September 1, 2008.

Since 1998, Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) has been working with construction industry stakeholders to develop a regulation on re-employment and return to work that encourages co-operation between workers and employers. The regulation was filed by the provincial government in February 2008. Now the WSIB, after years of consultation with workers and employers from all parts of the industry, is implementing operational policies that give life to the re-employment portion of the provincial regulation.

"This has been a long process but I'm proud of the outcome because it's a win for workers, a win for employers and a win for the workplace safety and insurance system," said Steve Mahoney, WSIB Chair. "Working as partners, we've crafted a solution for the construction industry by the construction industry."

The industry-led work resulted in re-employment policies that have been hailed by employer and worker groups in the construction sector.

"Implementation of the new policies is a tremendous step forward for injured workers and the construction industry," said Clive Thurston, president of the Ontario General Contractors Association. "Working side-by-side with trade unions and the WSIB, we've ironed out a set of policies that will make life better for injured workers while protecting the bottom line for employers. This collaboration is the workplace safety and insurance system at its finest."

The re-employment policies balance the interests of workers, employers and the workplace health and safety system by articulating the obligation of an employer to re-employ an injured worker who has suffered a lost-time injury.

The top priority in the policies is to help injured workers make a safe return to work. Although the employer must offer to re-employ the injured worker under certain conditions, employers will not be required to create jobs that do not exist, nor offer preferential treatment to injured workers.

To educate the construction industry and its workers on the policies, the WSIB will work with trade unions and industry associations between September 2008 and April 2009 to disseminate information. While the education of the workplace parties on their re-employment obligations is underway, the associated penalties will not be enforced.

However, as of April 2009, re-employment penalties may be levied against employers who are not in compliance with the re-employment policies. The WSIB will only apply penalties as a last resort. To ensure compliance, the WSIB will focus on educating and assisting the workplace parties.

Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) plays a key role in the province's occupational health and safety system. The WSIB administers no-fault workplace insurance for employers and their workers and is committed to the prevention of workplace injuries and illnesses. The WSIB provides disability benefits, monitors the quality of health care, and assists in early and safe return to work for workers who are injured on the job or contract an occupational disease.

- 30 -

For further information, please contact:

Christine Arnott
WSIB Media Relations
416-344-4202
christine_arnott@wsib.on.ca