



# NS Fisheries Sector Council

## Safety Sentinel

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### Saving Lives... and Money

Workers Compensation rates in the fishing industry have continued to rise over the last number of years. Every extra dollar paid in Workers Compensation premiums is a dollar less that can be invested in plant facilities, fishing enterprises, marketing activities or employment.

In 2004 an advisory group comprised of representatives of the fish processing sector began work through the NS Fisheries Sector Council to begin the development of a strategy to combat the rising WCB rates in their sector. A study was commissioned which captured key information regarding the nature and causes of work related accidents and injuries. The study also examined why the number of WCB claims exceeding \$5,000 had increased so dramatically since the mid 1990's. A processors safety association was proposed at that time however, due to financial constraints in the industry the advisory group was unable to gain consensus on a levy funded safety model. Over the

next few years WCB rates continued to rise in all sectors of the fisheries and in 2007 a group of harvesting & aquaculture industry representatives formed a committee to explore accidents and injuries in their respective sectors. Again, a number of key issues were identified along with recommendations for industry to consider. There was consensus from those in industry who participated in the information sessions that the fishing industry should work together to start combating this serious issue. The idea of a safety association encompassing the entire industry ensued.

The issue of workplace safety is a shared responsibility. All companies and individuals in the industry share the cost of accidents and injuries. Working together to improve this will benefit all sectors of the fishing industry.

It is proposed that this be achieved through a Safety Association for the Fishing Industry.

### Current Rates and Trends in the Fishing Industry

The chart below illustrates just how much the Fishing Industry is paying in WCB premiums. 2009 rates have been recently released.

Sector	Rate 1999	Rate 2009	Percentage Increase	Total Payroll 2007	Total Premiums Paid 2007
Harvesting	6.43	7.48	16%	\$ 156.1m	\$ 11.3m
Processing	3.96	5.19	31%	\$ 93.4m	\$ 4.6m
Aquaculture	2.30	4.18	82%	\$ 11.3m	\$ 0.5m
				<b>\$ 260.8m</b>	<b>\$ 16.4m</b>

If nothing is done and the industry continues on this path, the results could be devastating. It is time to take action and begin to reverse this trend.

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#### DID YOU KNOW???

- The most common type of injury reported in the fishing industry are back injuries

#### How can these be Prevented?

- Get as close to the object as possible before lifting
- Avoid twisting
- Get help to carry very heavy or awkward objects
- Place heavy objects on surfaces about knee high to avoid lifting to and from deck level, when possible
- Stack or lift heavy objects no higher than shoulder level, when possible



## Accident Investigation Tips— The Tricks of the Trade

When an accident or injury occurs, it is important for a company to have a process in place to effectively investigate. Many reasons can be cited as to why to investigate; most importantly— why the incident occurred and how to prevent it from happening again. Accidents that involve no injury or property damage should still be investigated in order to determine the hazard that should be corrected.

Little time as possible should be lost between the accident or near miss and the beginning of the investigation.

Steps involved in conducting an accident investigation:

- Secure the scene
- Collect information
- Analyze the information
- Report on corrective action
- Evaluate and follow up

The “SCARE” method is an effective way to investigate an accident.

It is to be noted that there are companies in the fishing industry that have gone to the extent of developing their own in-house accident investigation form, which is customized to their operation. This has been an effective tool for their

organization and has assisted them in preventing further accidents from occurring. It is hoped that a standard form can be developed in the future, which is customized and made use of by the fishing industry.



*Having an effective accident investigation process in place could save your organization hundreds or even thousands of dollars.*

### Do Safety Associations Work?

There is one thing that has been learned over the past number of years by individuals in various industries and that is –

#### **Safety Associations Work!**

The Forestry Safety Society of Nova Scotia is a prime example. Approximately eleven years ago the forestry industry was in a dilemma similar to that which faces the fisheries today. Their WCB rates were at \$10.27 per \$100 of payroll and projections placed that rate at an astounding \$32.23 per \$100 within 12 years if nothing was done. They decided to tackle the issue head on and formed a Forestry Safety Society to deliver quality training programs to ensure safe work environments. Through a strong commitment to safety and injured workers' early and safe return to work and preventing injuries, WCB assessment rates for forestry have gone **down by 40 percent** in the past five years resulting **\$4,000,000 in savings** for forestry employers and many fewer accidents!

### The Top Three in Injuries—Fisheries

*(As reported by the WCB of Nova Scotia)*

#### **Top 3 Natures of Injury:**

1. Other traumatic injuries and disorders
2. Traumatic injuries to muscles
3. Open wounds

#### **Top 3 Parts of Body Injured:**

1. Back
2. Fingers
3. Shoulders

#### **Top 3 events causing injury:**

1. Overexertion
2. Struck by an object
3. Non Classifiable

## Contact Us

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