



## A partnership for workplace safety

Southwind Inn, Oliver, B.C.

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Oliver, the “wine capital of Canada”, is home to Southwind Inn, a 46-room inn with a restaurant, pub, and cold beer and wine store. It also boasts a health and safety committee, which Operations Manager Janice Sarell believes contributes to their excellent workplace health and safety record. Janice is the daughter of owner Joan Sarell, and a member of the Inn’s health and safety committee.

“The committee doesn’t meet regularly when we’re really busy during the summer, but we get together if there’s a problem to discuss”, reports Janice. “In the slow season, we get together more often to talk about any risks or problems that our staff has identified.”

Staffing fluctuates with the season, growing with the help of students during the summer to about 50, then shrinking down to about 32 (part-time and full-time employees) in the off season. A crucial part of the staff is the 4-member maintenance team, to whom Janice gives a great deal of credit for keeping the inn safe for both staff and visitors. “The maintenance team is really keen about implementing safety ideas. For example, they’ve just finished painting yellow lines on the front of all our steps.” The maintenance staff also helps out with heavy lifting, ensuring that the proper techniques and equipment are used.

According to Janice, the Inn’s greatest risks (cuts, burns, slips, trips and falls), are in their busy kitchen. The kitchen not only provides meals for restaurant and pub clientele, but also caters special occasions such as weddings and parties. “Our experienced staff mentor the seasonal employees, giving them tips on how to avoid injuries”, says Janice.

Although the Inn is a member of the BC and Yukon Hotels Association, which provides some guidance on health and safety, Janice reports that their most important partnership is with Oliver’s WCB officer. “He drops by from time to time to go over our health and safety issues, and gives us guidance on how we can make the Inn more safe. Recently he came by and checked the ventilation in our pub’s smoking room. He suggested that we install a half-door that would help direct smoke toward the ventilation system. We’re already making plans to get one installed.”

The partnership is just one part of the Inn’s impressive health and safety system, but it is an important one. “It’s hard for a small inn like ours to know all the health and safety issues. It’s great to get tips from someone who not only helps us identify problems, but can suggest solutions.”