



## WCB Small Business Survey 2003 – *Final Report* –

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background

- ◆ For the second year, Ipsos-Reid completed a total of 600 telephone interviews with small business employers in six high-risk industries. The final results have been weighted to accurately reflect the number of small businesses in each of the high-risk industries. These weights are construction (54%), hospitality (19%), forestry (13%), heavy manufacturing (7%), wood and paper products (5%), and health care and social services (4%). The margin of error for the total sample is  $\pm 5.8$  percent, 19 times out of 20.

### Hazards And Injuries In The Workplace

- ◆ The most common day-to-day hazards facing high-risk sector workers include falling/tripping (22%), cuts/lacerations (16%) and traffic accidents (16%). Other hazards include strains/lifting injuries (11%), injuries from machinery (10%), carelessness (9%) and burns/scalds (9%).
- ◆ The top cause of accidents and injuries is perceived to be carelessness and lack of attention (31%).
- ◆ In terms of placing a greater emphasis on safety, high-risk employers see little room for improvement. While nine-in-ten (93%) employers accept that most accidents and injuries are preventable through education, training and supervision, nearly all (95%) think that their company is already doing everything it can to minimize the risk of accidents and injuries.
- ◆ In addition, the vast majority of high-risk employers believe the onus for reducing accidents and injuries rests with employees. Nearly nine-in-ten (85%) believe that most accidents are the result of employee carelessness and nine-in-ten (93%) think that they can be avoided through basic common sense.

### Actions To Reduce Workplace Accidents And Injuries

- ◆ Employers devote little time to activities related to reducing the risk of accidents and injuries in the workplace. Two thirds of employers (66%) spend ten percent or less of their time on activities related to reducing the risk of accidents and injuries in their workplace
- ◆ Most employers have a first aid kit at every worksite (94%), regularly inspect their workplace to identify hazards and unsafe procedures (93%) and investigate all accidents and incidents (91%).
- ◆ Three quarters (74%) also say their company meets regularly with employees to talk about health and safety issues.
- ◆ Fewer than half (40%) have a health and safety representative for their employees or a health and safety committee.

- ◆ In addition to activities that companies in all high-risk industries might be doing to reduce risks, employers were also asked about actions specific to their industry. The list below summarizes actions taken by fewer than eight-in-ten employers in specific industries (these percentages exclude employers who said the action is not applicable to their company).
  - One-in-four (26%) forestry employers do not have written procedures for evacuation of injured workers.
  - One-in-four (24%) forestry employers do not train workers on how to recognize and enter confined spaces.
  
  - One-in-three (36%) heavy manufacturing employers do not have written lockout procedures for their equipment.
  - One-in-four (27%) heavy manufacturing employers do not train workers on how to recognize and enter confined spaces.
  
  - Two-in-ten (21%) hospitality employers do not train workers on how to deal with violent or aggressive customers and clients.
  
  - Four-in-ten (44%) health care and social service employers do not have written procedures for dealing with biological hazards.
  - Three-in-ten (29%) health care employers do not train workers on how to deal with violent or aggressive customers and clients.
  - One-in-four (23%) health care employers do not train workers on proper procedures for lifting and moving patients.
  
  - Five-in-ten (52%) wood and paper product employers do not use job rotation to reduce injuries.
  - Four-in-ten (41%) wood and paper product employers do not have written lockout procedures for their equipment.
  - One-in-four (23%) wood and paper employers do not train workers on how to recognize and enter confined spaces.

## WCB And Occupational Health And Safety

- ◆ Most employers (84%) say that they have a “good” understanding of occupational health and safety requirements, albeit a less than in-depth knowledge. Three-in-ten (28%) say they have a “very” good understanding of WCB’s requirements, while an additional six-in-ten (56%) say they have a “somewhat” good understanding.
- ◆ High-risk employers give WCB a passing grade for its performance in helping reduce the risk of workplace accidents and injuries. A little over half (56%) think WCB has done a good job in this regard, while three-in-ten (28%) think WCB has done a poor job.

## Occupational Health And Safety Information From WCB

- ◆ Most employers (67%) say they have received information from WCB on ways to reduce the risk of workplace accidents and injuries.
- ◆ Of those who have received information, eight-in-ten (78%) found it useful, with most (57%) saying it was “somewhat” useful rather than “very” useful (21%).
- ◆ Three-quarters (75%) of high-risk employers want to receive further information from WCB on how to reduce the risk of workplace accidents and injuries.
  - The topic of greatest interest to high-risk employers is information on WCB’s occupational health and safety requirements for small businesses. Three-quarters (74%) of all employers say they are interested in receiving more information on this topic.
  - Seven-in-ten employers also express interest in information about new equipment and technology (70%).
  - Six-in-ten employers express interest in initiatives to reduce accidents for young workers (62%), case studies of other companies (62%) and statistics on injuries in their industry (58%).
  - Booklets and pamphlets that can be distributed to employees as well as information on WCB’s website are the most popular method for WCB to deliver information to employers (62% good method for each). Other methods approved by a majority of high-risk employers include a regular newsletter (56%) and customized information sent by email (53%).
  - Less popular communication methods include videos that can be watched at employee meetings (48%), posters (48%) and on-site visits by WCB officers (46%).