



Workplace Safety &  
Insurance Board

Commission de la sécurité  
professionnelle et de l'assurance  
contre les accidents du travail

## **What is the Safety Groups Program?**

The Safety Groups Program is a new approach the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) is taking to eliminate workplace injuries and illnesses. The program rewards firms that incorporate prevention measures into their daily business. It began as a three-year trial in 2000 and due to its success became an ongoing prevention initiative in July of 2002.

The key idea behind the program is that a well-integrated workplace health and safety program makes good business sense. Firms from similar or different businesses or rate groups volunteer to form a group with a collective purpose: to learn from each other's experience in implementing injury and illness prevention programs. The firms then benefit collectively from the program rewards.

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*"Our safety group has been one of the most effective tools for learning and achieving compliance in a non-adversarial environment. Tasks have been made easier through step-by-step assistance and a program that has a genuine interest in the success of all the participating companies." - Tracey Wright, Fleet Safety Coordinator, Can-ar Coach Service.*

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## **What was learned from the program trial?**

The purpose of the trial program was to evaluate if this occupational health and safety initiative would assist in the achievement of the WSIB's vision to eliminate workplace injury and illness. During the trial phase, sponsors, employers and their employees evaluated the program.

The evaluation revealed:

- Safety Groups participants experienced fewer lost-time injuries and a significantly lower severity rate than firms not participating in the program
- Employers gained greater access to health and safety resources
- Participants received the "know how" and the motivation to implement health and safety initiatives
- Employers, employees and sponsors perceived their workplaces to be safer because of participation in the program
- Most employers reported being very satisfied with the program and their sponsor
- Occupational health and safety products and services were delivered by the WSIB in an efficient and timely manner.

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*"Safety groups are raising the level of safety awareness on work sites. They are a mechanism that is changing how construction is done; safety is no longer an after thought. It is an integral part of how tasks are organized." - Martin Deeley, Safety Group Coordinator, MIECO/OMCA.*

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## **How does the program work?**

At the beginning of each year, your firm selects five safety elements that it will initiate or improve upon from the Safety Groups' Achievement List provided by the WSIB. Your firm will learn how to implement these initiatives through attending meetings, sharing ideas and pooling resources with other firms in your safety group. At the end of the year, your group can receive a rebate, based on the entire group's success in implementing their selected safety elements. In each subsequent year, a firm is required to maintain their elements from the previous year and pick five new elements.

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*"Logging in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a whole new ball game. New practices and regulations are introduced on a daily basis. The Safety Groups Program gave us the base we needed to ensure that safety issues would be addressed, investigated and resolved. I found that it brought our safety committee to a higher level of unity." - Jack Pichette, Camp Superintendent, Foley et Timber (1986) Ltd.*

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## **Sponsorship**

Each safety group has a sponsor. Sponsors can be from trade or employer associations. The sponsor's role is to oversee the group and regularly report progress to the WSIB. They promote the group's interaction by organizing joint meetings and leadership workshops. They offer guidance on action plan development and track the group's progress.

## **Program eligibility:**

- Firms must participate as members of a group
- Each group must have at least 40 firms, with a minimum combined premium level of \$250,000
- Your firm must be a Schedule 1 (collectively insured) firm, committed to participating for one full calendar year
- You must be in good standing with the WSIB
- At least 25% of firms in a group cannot be receiving rebates under another WSIB experience rating program (i.e. are in either a neutral or surcharge position)
- Employers can participate in only one safety group at a time and cannot participate in the Safe Communities Incentive Program(SCIP).

## ***To participate in the Safety Groups Program, you are required to:***

- Attend at least three group meetings throughout the year
- Complete a base-line and year-end workplace assessment
- Develop a health and safety action plan
- Develop new or improve existing health and safety programs for each action plan element selected
- Keep sponsor informed of your progress
- Submit a year-end achievement report documenting your accomplishments for the year.

## ***Rewards and benefits***

The greater the number of firms that achieve more of the elements contained in their action plans, the higher the group's rebate. It is in the group members' mutual interest to assist and encourage each other, especially those beginning the process or having difficulty implementing their prevention programs. The size of the rebate is dependent on the success of the entire group. The rebate is based on the average percentage score determined through a workplace assessment.

## ***Why join Safety Groups?***

- ✓ Fewer WSIB claims
- ✓ Increase competitiveness
- ✓ Earn financial rebate
- ✓ Reduce individual WSIB premium
- ✓ Potential to reduce rate group premium
- ✓ Increase productivity
- ✓ Improve quality
- ✓ Maintain a healthy and stable workforce
- ✓ Bolster employee morale
- ✓ Access a health and safety network.

**For more information, contact the  
WSIB Prevention Division at:  
416-344-1016 or 1-800-663-6639**

**or e-mail [prevention@wsib.on.ca](mailto:prevention@wsib.on.ca).  
[www.wsib.on.ca](http://www.wsib.on.ca)**