



Just the Facts: Safety Management Systems

The Ministry of Health has directed all Health Regions to implement a Safety Management System (SMS) in order to reduce workplace injuries in Healthcare.

Healthcare worker injuries are the highest number of *Workers' Compensation Board* (WCB) claims; therefore, the Government is now requiring that all Health care facilities/services implement this system. The *Saskatchewan Association for Safe Workplaces in Health* (SASWH) is the safety association with equal union/employer representatives for the health sector.

SASWH has developed a tool to assist health care Employers in this regard. However, it is not mandatory that Employers use their system; yet the Health Care Unions (SEIU-West, SUN, CUPE, HSAS, and SGEU) are urging them to do so. Either way, a program must be implemented within a defined timeline.

What is a Safety Management System (SMS)?

- It is a process to reduce the risk of injury in the Health Care sector. It is a collection of documents, forms, procedures, policies, practices, training and communication required to effectively manage health and safety in the workplace. In short, it is a safety program.
- Part of the system requires an assessment to occur in some healthcare facilities where there are the highest level of workplace injuries within each Health Region. ***The Ministry has determined that each facility must be complete this by March 31, 2013.***

Who should be involved in the SMS?

- Workers need to be involved directly in program development. Workers are exposed to hazards and have a good idea of the current realities they face each day in the workplace.
- Specifically, we believe that ***Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Committee members should be included as part of the Assessment Team.***

What will be happening in my workplace?

- *Assessors will be using a variety of methods to gather information from those worksites where the highest injury rates exist.* They will be observing the workplace, interviewing workers to see if they have been properly trained in Occupational Health and Safety procedures and protocols and they will be requiring documented proof from the Employer that proper policies are in place.
- Based on the result of the assessments, we expect the Employer will have to make changes to ensure that they are doing everything possible to make the workplace safer.

WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT?

SEIU-West wants to be very clear. It is our expectation that OH&S Committee members are provided the opportunity to participate in the SMS. We have notified all Health Care Employers of this request and await confirmation from them as to the structure/composition of their Assessment Teams. It is time for true prevention of injuries in Health Care and it is vital that workers have a say in this.

WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?

Please encourage your employer to utilize the Health and Safety Committee in your worksite.

If you are chosen for an interview with the Assessment Team:

- Please make sure that you identify all hazards in the workplace.
- Please indicate if and where training or resources (such as safe staffing levels) are lacking.