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MOL TO TARGET SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS IN A SCHOOL BOARD SAFETY BLITZ

The Ministry of Labour (“MOL”) has announced a series of safety blitzes scheduled for November of 2009 that will target slips, trips and falls (“Falls”), and that may affect your schools.

Inspectors will visit schools to discuss Falls and to review plans to prevent Falls, particularly in parking lots¹, and will focus on assessing the measures being undertaken by schools to prevent Falls, including policies, procedures, communications strategies and training.

In this *FTR Now*, we outline the Ministry’s new safety initiative and discuss some of the preventative measures your School Board may wish to implement to minimize the hazards posed by Falls.

THE INITIATIVE

The MOL’s safety blitzes are conducted through *Safe at Work Ontario*, a program which focusses on improving workplace health and safety practices through education, training and enforcement of primarily the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. The *Safe at Work Ontario* program works in partnership with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and Ontario’s Health and Safety Associations.

An important aspect of the *Safe at Work Ontario* program is the performance of sector and hazard-specific inspection blitzes.

The purpose of the blitzes is to raise awareness of particular workplace hazards, to promote ongoing compliance with the *Occupational Health and*

¹ Safe at Work Ontario TODAY Issue #2, August 2009

Safety Act and its regulations, and to enforce measures regarding non-compliance.

OTHER BLITZES WHICH MAY BE COMING

The MOL is also considering a blitz for educational institutions, such as high schools, specifically targeting woodworking shops and hazardous chemicals in classes and labs.

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

Advance notice of the blitzes can allow your Board to prepare for possible MOL visits.

School Boards should be proactive in auditing where Falls may occur on their school properties, to ensure they adequately protect the safety of workers, students and others and comply with all legislative and regulatory requirements. Any policies and procedures should be current and show that the School Board and individual schools are taking all necessary steps to ensure a workplace free of hazards that could cause injury.

For example, any policies could outline protocols for snow clearing and spreading salt/sand on parking lots and around the school’s property during inclement weather. All steps and surrounding areas of schools should be clear of all obstacles and properly maintained at all times. Similarly, the corridors and traveled spaces within the schools should be clear of obstacles and should be properly maintained. The policies should articulate a process for immediate reporting when a Fall has taken place, in compliance with all legislative obligations. Your health and safety program and policies should also apply to any contractors or sub-contractors you may engage.

Your Hicks Morley lawyer would be pleased to discuss your School Board’s strategy for preventing Falls in the workplace and to review with you the *Safe at Work Ontario* program and its possible impact on your operations.

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