

SHARP Stories

Read what the top
speakers say on safety

September 2009



BC Forest Safety Council
Unsafe is Unacceptable



SAFETY & HEALTH AWARENESS RESEARCH PROGRAM

*News from the recent conference,
"Sharpen Your Safety Senses - Understanding the Human Factor"
about occupational health & safety related to the forest industry in northern B.C.*

Workplace injuries - what's the problem?

Dr. Louis Hugo Francescetti opened the conference with a lively and interactive presentation on the importance of injury prevention in the workplace.

"Dr. Lou" didn't mince his words as he presented his engaging presentation about the perils of injuries and accidents in industrial environments.

When it comes to production-based industries such as the forest industry, Dr. Lou says safety is everyone's responsibility - including management.

Management vision, commitment and drive is essential to getting the result of outstanding safety performance in this field, he said. Those organizations that really value safety - and demonstrate it from the top down - tend to be the ones with better safety records.

Dr. Lou's wide-ranging presentation made recommendations such as allowing shift workers to have cat naps when required - a rested worker is a safe worker.

"I'd love to bring you into your plants between midnight

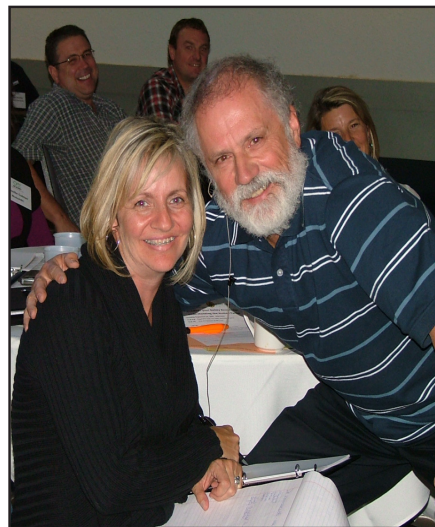
and 6 a.m. and show you how many people are sleeping - you don't think it's happening. It is. They are covering for each other," he said.

Dr. Lou recommended that industries should negotiate catnaps into the collective agreement between employer and employee in an effort to increase the productivity and safety of employees.

He also identified mental illnesses such as stress, depression anxiety and addiction as significant factors in the lives of workers. If those factors are left unchecked, a worker may not be in the best mental shape to be working in potentially dangerous environments.

He says mental illness is a major problem in the workforce, calling it the silent killer because of the stigma that is attached to it.

"If nothing comes out of today other than people being comfortable and willing to be able to talk about mental illnesses, substance abuse and fatigue, then I've accomplished my goal," he said.



Take a look inside:

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WorkSafe BC's Human Factors team takes new approach to accident investigations

It's all too easy to point a finger at a person involved in a workplace accident and immediately lay blame on that person for not thinking properly, making a seemingly obvious mistake or for not following procedures leading to an incident.

But WorkSafe's human factors team member Heather Kahle says it's time to stop playing the blame game and start looking at the many factors that can contribute to an accident. The human factors approach to investigating incidents is rooted in scientific evidence gathering that is applied to look at the interaction of the human to the work environment. At the heart of the human factors approach is the overlap between people, management systems and facilities that are involved in an incident.

"The whole framework and premise for human factors is that workers don't decide to make errors, they do things that make sense at the time of the accident," she said.

Using real-life and relevant case studies of workplace fatali-



Above, George Van DeBon and Dwayne Klassen of Canfor-Plateau do some work shopping in the Human Factors presentation.

ties that have occurred around the province, Heather was able to identify many factors that are at play, when human error could have been assumed without delving deeper into other root causes.

Delegates took part in an exercise that demonstrated just how uncommon 'common sense' can

be.

"The label of 'human error' is a symptom of deeper trouble," says Heather adding human error is not random. It is systemically connected to the tools, environment and work process. Human error is not the conclusion of an investigation it should just be the beginning.

Managing stress as a key to work success

With many mills and other parts of the forest industry looking at creative solutions to keep the workforce employed while watching the bottom line, many workers are now dealing with reduced hours, job sharing or less shifts per week as the new reality of the forest industry takes hold. And for many workers, financial uncertainty is a significant cause of stress. The Sept. 24 panel on challenges and stresses in the workplace featured Mike Tasker of WCB speaking to keeping the focus on safety, Myrt Turner of M. Turner & Associates speaking about retraining opportunities and Julie Jaggernath from the Credit Counseling Society speaking to the need to deal with finances as a way to alleviate financial stress. The Credit Counseling Society gets all sorts of calls from northern BC and its workers are available to help people make healthy financial choices and really evaluate their changing budget.



SHELL approach to investigations helps pinpoint human and other factors

The purpose of using the human factors approach to investigation is to take a look at the context of the situation at the time of the accident. Lead by WorkSafe's Human Factors team member Jenny Colman, delegates were given a walk through the SHELL approach to investigation.

S-Software – these are the rules, regulations, procedures etc. that are in effect

H-Hardware – the vehicles, tools, machinery, physical equipment involved in the incident

E-Environment – the climate, vibration, noise, political or management culture

L-Liveware (centre) – this is the person involved in the incident

L-Liveware (surrounding) – these are the other people in the workplace including co-workers, management and supervisors

Delegates were given the task of reading a workplace accident



Jenny Colman speaks about the SHELL approach to investigation.

scenario and approaching it from the SHELL data collection model. The idea was to look at the interaction between the worker and other elements in the situation and query why there may be a mismatch between the employee's actions and the interactions with the other factors. It is a data collection tool and a way of organizing information to go through a process of elimination and help devise questions to probe the

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incident further.

"Aim for high end recommendations that come out of the investigation," Colman said.

"It's not fair to stop at the human and say you made an error and because of that a person's life was taken. If there are other factors at play, those need to be identified to mitigate those types of incidents in the future."

How perspective, choices and vision can change your life



David Smith

In 1993 David Smith was working as a successful entrepreneur, was about to get married and enjoyed time on his boat - the Salty Dog. Then, seemingly out of the blue, David was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumour. It's fair to say his life changed that day.

It would have been too easy to say, 'woe is me,' so David opted to change his outlook on life, try to live every minute he had to the best of his ability and decided he wouldn't let his condition prevent him from getting on with life.

"Am I going to get better or am I going to be bitter?" he asked himself. He chose to get better.

Miraculously his brain tumour did

not grow and despite a delay of several months, David and his fiancé got married and went on to have two boys. He is an example of the power of positive decisions and taking control of one's destiny can have dramatic results.

Just as his life was changed by positive decisions, so do decisions have an impact on safety in the workplace.

"I think the role that you can play as safety advocates is an incredibly valuable role," Smith said.

"Perspective, choices and vision have had a major impact on my life. They became the skills I used in management consulting, motorcycle riding and later on when I got ill."

Safety & Health Awareness Research Program



What you said about the conference:

Johnny Janzen, Decker Lake Forest Products, planer supervisor:

"I think we're shifting away from policy to motivation...it's nice to listen to people who have more experience than you have."

Geoff Taylor, Canfor-Houston, electrician:

"Dr. Lou was a highlight - the way he came across. He was funny, had a lot of information and was very enlightening."

Ken Brickell, Canfor-Quesnel, planer/chipper operator:

"I really like the fact that people were talking about financial stress and how that affects the workforce; that people have hidden problems and how that can affect you in terms of stress."

Jay Higginson, Babine Forest Products, planing room lead hand

"I've never been to a conference like this before - it's good to get a lot of information."

Dr. Bob's tips for maximizing learning potential in workers

Dr. Robert Aitken was a great choice for finishing off the conference with humour, insight and a multi-media approach to getting his point across.

His presentation called "Leading change with the brain in mind" looked at the factors that affect learning and how if implemented in the workplace can optimize learning and retention of information learned.

By looking at how the brain functions and processes information, employers can promote optimal learning conditions to help workers deal better with change.

"Leading change, whether you are in education, health care,

business, industry or government is a tremendous challenge," Dr. Aitken says.

Being cheerleaders, rather than

cops when it comes to employee performance is one way to reinforce that work is being done well.

"When you're trying to train somebody, don't scare the hell out of them

because they can't think," Dr. Aitken advises.

By giving an employee an emotional and meaningful connection to a new task are two of the most important things when it comes to learning. Dr. Aitken's lively presentation and interactive brain teasers were a big hit.



Conference pics



Helpful links:

www.conifer.ca

www.bcforestsafesafe.org

www.diabetes.ca

www.labour.gov.bc.ca/eao

www.healthyheart.bc.ca

www.workdrugfreebc.com

www.drlou.ca

www.nomoredebts.org