The Safety Issue

CPO George Gritziotis talks about falls, accreditation and new training standards.

Plus profiles on lottery winner CJs Express, the National Day of Mourning, the proposed WSIB rate framework, workplace fines and more!
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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Threat identification is a key component of business development. It’s how we stay sharp, how we identify adversity, and one of the tools we use to steer clear of trouble. Trick is, threats aren’t always icebergs in the clear sea, things we can see from miles away. Sometimes they’re more insidious.

I’d like to propose a far narrower definition: on the scale of a construction site. Can a construction site have culture? Sure it can, even if you’re not building an opera house. A construction site’s culture is the collection of values, norms and roles that every person on that site is expected to contribute to in his or her way. It’s partially about an approach to health and safety: the things we do to prevent accidents. It’s partially about fostering a climate of respect for one another, about knowing we all have jobs to do and about chipping in to get the job done. And it’s partially about doing the responsible thing for the environment, recycling what we can, reusing what we can, reducing waste where we can, and taking pride in your work and your industry.

Above all, though, a construction site culture is also about understanding what makes each of us different and complementing each other’s strengths. I think it’s too easy for generals or electricians or carpet installers to get trapped in the same old ways of thinking and not giving our neighbours on the site enough respect.

Let’s work together to build better jobsite cultures. Whether promoting better health and safety practices, respecting one another, protecting the environment, or taking more time to understand our different roles and responsibilities, there’s always more we can do to make job sites happier, better places.

What about the bad seeds in your company? Do you have any? Look closely. Identifying them can be tricky, and once you do, how do you deal with them effectively? Because if you don’t, they risk spreading toxin throughout the organization and damaging morale, productivity and company reputation.

We at GVCA know you face these kinds of threats every day. That’s why we’re launching an educational series to address and fix these concerns. The aim is to help you better identify the threats on your horizon, icebergs or otherwise, and give you the tips and strategies you need to address them.

If you want to learn more, or have other ideas about programs such as this that might help other members, send me a note. We’re always looking for great ideas to help our members.

mgeorge@gvca.org

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The construction site

Culture

What do you think of when someone says the word “culture” to you? Language? Food? The arts? When you measure it geographically, a culture can encompass any of these ideas, and more. But when you’re talking in these terms, you’re talking broadly: nationally, regionally, even community-wide.

I’d like to propose a far narrower definition: on the scale of a construction site. Can a construction site have culture? Sure it can, even if you’re not building an opera house. A construction site’s culture is the collection of values, norms and roles that every person on that site is expected to contribute to in his or her way. It’s partially about an approach to health and safety: the things we do to prevent accidents. It’s partially about fostering a climate of respect for one another, about knowing we all have jobs to do and about chipping in to get the job done. And it’s partially about doing the responsible thing for the environment, recycling what we can, reusing what we can, reducing waste where we can, and taking pride in your work and your industry.

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mgeorge@gvca.org

Know Your
organizational threats

When was the last time you stopped to identify the threats to your company? We all have them. The members of our board of directors and I work together regularly to understand the threats to GVCA as an association. And believe me, we face a few.

Threat identification is a key component of business development. It’s how we stay sharp, how we identify adversity, and one of the tools we use to steer clear of trouble. Trick is, threats aren’t always icebergs in the clear sea, things we can see from miles away. Sometimes they’re more insidious.

Sometimes they come from within the organization. Imagine, for example, hiring a new manager or supervisor who shows outstanding results in some areas of her job, production numbers, client satisfaction, but who lacks the ability to lead a team or deliver the results you expect.

What about the bad seeds in your company? Do you have any? Look closely. Identifying them can be tricky, and once you do, how do you deal with them effectively? Because if you don’t, they risk spreading toxin throughout the organization and damaging morale, productivity and company reputation.

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mgeorge@gvca.org
Crystal Ball Report: Unmatched Construction Intelligence

GVCA’s Crystal Ball Report is a unique and insightful member service. Updated daily by GVCA staff, the report tracks planned projects during the pre-bidding phases, following them from concept to design to prequalification, construction and completion.

Lexington Public School

ONgvca-138239
Preliminary Design Financing
Project Status Phase 1 of 4, Pre-Design, awaiting Ministry of Education approval and funding
Est Completion 09 2018
Project Details
Approx. 13 classroom addition and renovations to replace porta-pack classroom wing
What’s New
Updates: April 25, 2015; Ministry response to 2015 Capital Priorities Grant Submission; This project is not identified as a priority from a provincial perspective; 2014 Capital Priorities Grant Submission; This project is #8 in the board’s top 8 priorities submitted for funding in the October 31, 2013 Capital Priorities Submission April 30, 2013: Update regarding Lexington P.S. addition and new school construction January 24, 2013; Ministry response to 2012 Capital Priorities Grant Submission; this project was not considered for Capital Priorities Grant funding as it was identified as a lower priority by the board.
Date Received 2014-Sep-25

Lackner Woods Public School

ONgvca-138240
Preliminary Design Financing
Unknown
Est Completion 09 2018
Project Details
Classroom addition and renovations (not FDK related)
What’s New
Updates: April 25, 2015; Ministry response to 2014 Capital Priorities Grant Submission; this project was not in the board’s top 8 priorities and therefore could not be submitted for funding in the October 31, 2014 capital priorities submission; Update regarding Bridgeport P.S. boundary changes and school construction timelines January 24, 2013; Ministry response to 2012 Capital Priorities Grant Submission; This project was not considered for Capital Priorities Grant funding at this time. The board is requested to consider other schools/capacity in the area to manage this accommodation pressure.
Date Received 2014-Sep-25

New East K-W Elementary School

ONgvca-138245
Preliminary Design Financing
Underway
Est Completion 09 2018
Project Details
New JK-6 school of approximately 325 pupil place capacity
What’s New
Updates: 2015 Capital Priorities Grant Submission; project was not in the board’s top 8 priorities and therefore could not be submitted for funding in the October 31, 2014 capital priorities submission; Update regarding Bridgeport P.S. boundary changes and school construction timelines January 24, 2013; Ministry response to 2012 Capital Priorities Grant Submission; This project was not considered for Capital Priorities Grant funding as it was identified as a lower priority by the board June 21, 2010; East KW Accommodation Review Completed
Date Received 2014-Sep-25
Alcohol testing is a difficult legal issue because it pits legitimate interests against one another. On the one hand, an employer has a legitimate interest in maintaining a safe work environment. On the other hand, employees have a reasonable expectation of privacy. The issue is further complicated by differences between union and non-union environments.

The Supreme Court of Canada recently brought some clarity to the law for unionized workplaces. The case of Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada, Local 30 v. Irving Pulp & Paper, Ltd. involved an employer who had unilaterally implemented mandatory random alcohol testing at its unionized paper mill. The employer’s policy included a universal random alcohol testing clause wherein the 10 percent of employees deemed to be in safety sensitive positions were to be randomly selected for surprise breathalyzer tests over the course of a year. A positive test over 0.04 percent would result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

The Supreme Court said that an employer can only impose a rule with disciplinary consequences if the need for the rule outweighed the harmful impact on employees’ privacy rights. The question was whether there was “reasonable cause” to perform testing. In a dangerous work environment, employers are generally entitled to test individual employees on a case-by-case basis if there is “reasonable cause” to believe that an employee was impaired while on duty, where the employee was directly involved in a workplace accident or incident, or the employee is returning to work after treatment for substance abuse.

A unilaterally imposed policy of random testing for all employees in a dangerous workplace is not permitted unless there is a general problem of substance abuse in the workplace. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the employer’s program of randomized alcohol testing was not justified by a history of eight documented alcohol consumption or impairment incidents over 15 years. There had never been any accidents, injuries, or near misses associated with this alcohol use.

There is little room for error when it comes to safety. Everyone, including employees, stands to gain from safety in the workplace. So what can you do to protect worker and public safety if you are concerned about alcohol use or abuse in the workplace?

Unionized workplaces

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Non-union workplaces

The balance struck by the Court between safety and privacy in non-union environments is slightly different. In non-unionized environments, random alcohol testing is permitted where:

i. an employee works in a safety-sensitive position; and,

ii. workplace supervision is non-existent or minimal.

Therefore, in a non-union environment, an employer does not have to show that there is a general problem of substance abuse in the workplace in order to implement random alcohol testing.

As is the case in unionized workplaces, employers of non-union workplaces may also carry out testing on a case-by-case basis in a dangerous workplace where there has been an accident or where there is a suspected case of alcohol impairment.

However, an employer must have a written policy in place before performing any testing.

Drug testing is different

In Ontario, drug testing is not permitted. The rules for drug and alcohol testing are different because drug tests are less conclusive than alcohol tests. Drug tests cannot measure the degree of impairment at the time of the test. Some drugs stay in a person’s system for weeks, if not months. Therefore, a positive drug test does not mean that the worker was impaired at the time of the test. On the other hand, a worker with a significant amount of alcohol in his or her system is a verifiable safety hazard.

MORE QUESTIONS?

Should any doubt arise as to when alcohol testing can take place, or whether the employer has a duty to accommodate, contact your labour/employment lawyer for legal advice.

This article was written by Frank Carere and Devyn Coady, lawyers at Madorin, Snyder LLP in Kitchener.
Getting certified isn’t easy, however. Just getting ready to get certified requires a significant investment in time and energy. The audit process itself can be quite daunting and regular re-certification is needed to maintain the standard.

If all that sounds like a lot of work, you might want to change your tune. A number of large buyers of construction services, the Toronto Transit Commission and Infrastructure Ontario among them, are now considering COR certification as a condition of contract on some jobs. It’s expected that more owners will follow suit, and quite possibly it’s likely that some general contractors will start to require their subtrades to be COR compliant.

Some might see that as problematic. Others as an opportunity. View it as the latter. Start the wheels in motion now to obtain COR certification and use it as a marketing tool of sorts to stay in front of the competition. Because when COR becomes the minimum standard for more and more owners, more and more contractors will be forced to obtain the certification and the market for these services will be crowded. Getting certified now means you maintain a competitive advantage over other companies. It distinguishes you as a pioneer in the field. And the age-old rule in marketing is that if you’re not first into a new niche, you might as well be last.

By now you know that the Certificate of Recognition (COR) program is very much in place in Ontario. The safety management audit tool landed in the province in 2011. A number of contractors have since obtained COR certification, and that figure is growing as COR becomes evermore prominent.
GVCA Offers COR Assistance

Happily, the GVCA can help. Beginning January, the association will offer a new program called Navigating Your Health and Safety Audits. The initiative is designed to bring members along through the process of working through construction-related audits, such as COR, ISO certification and Workwell. In addition to helping members get ready for their audits and walking through the process of an audit, instructor Ellaline Davies, the president of Safety Works Consulting Inc. and herself a trained auditor, will host monthly meetings to offer further support.

With such supports in place, there’s no reason to delay COR certification, and every reason to take advantage of positioning yourself among the market leaders.

Ask about the COR program of support and training on navigating health and safety audits today!

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Does safety training have to be Multilingual?

With today’s diverse and multilingual workforce, it is logical that employers provide safety training in a language that is understandable to their workers. Diversity creates a need to provide safe and fair working environments for the multicultural workforce.

Is it required under the law?

As employers, you are responsible for ensuring the right safety message and the right safety policies, procedures, practices and expectations are communicated effectively, regardless of the background of your workers. Thus, yes, it is required that employers provide health and safety training and resources in a language other than English if it is needed to ensure non-speaking English workers understand the requirements under the law, their rights and obligations and all directives and instructions to work safely.

Most public-sector entities offer multilingual health and safety resources and training materials because they realize how important it is for employers to address the needs of employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Notwithstanding the above, we are not saying that you should produce your health and safety program in every language spoken. You need to assess the risk of accidents, injuries and illnesses that a language barrier will have on your workplace if a number of workers don’t understand your safety program and accompanying materials because it is not offered in a language they understand.

In jurisdictions where the language requirement is in the law, employers will sometimes be required to post explanatory material in English and in the majority language of a workplace if it is a language other than English. For example, in Ontario farming operations with migrant workers coming from countries that mostly speak Spanish, the safety material must be found in both English and Spanish.

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TIPS AND TRICKS

To communicate safety to workers whose first language is not English, safety experts have provided the following tips and tricks:

• If you have a safety committee, be sure to include one or more multilingual employees on it who can provide vital feedback on cultural differences and understanding, translation, multilingual resources and how well your multilingual safety efforts are working.

• Use direct hands-on training to show workers what you expect of them. And when you’ve completed their training, have them perform the skill while you watch, so you can make sure they understand.

• Team up a new worker with an experienced and safety-conscious worker who speaks his or her language for on-the-job training.

• If you have an experienced employee with good English skills who is also fluent in another language spoken by your workers, recruit that worker to provide formal training for his or her coworkers.

• Some companies have found that providing English as a second language classes for their workers contributes to improved safety.

• Workplace signs that provide necessary information should be printed in all of the languages that are used in the workplace. Written materials should be available to workers in their native languages. Make sure you obtain such multilingual resources from a credible source and that the resources have been properly translated (i.e., various dialect) and meet the needs of the organization. In addition, using the correct literacy level is just as important in other languages as it is in English. It is best to test the translated materials using a focus group made up of a subset of your target population.

This article was written by Yosie Saint-Cyr LLB, Managing Editor, HRinfodesk. She can be reached at editor@hrinfodesk.com.
When you step onto a construction site, you’d be hard pressed not to see a single smart phone or tablet being used. Smart devices are everywhere. It’s becoming more common for project teams to investigate software and app options that will allow them to make use of smart devices on site.

Despite this growing appetite, it can be challenging to coordinate the rollout of new software and make sure each stakeholder is on board. Because it’s not possible (nor advisable) to conduct a total process overhaul at once, the recommendation is to start by updating processes on site that will be easiest to move over to more digital methods. Typically, this involves finding processes that were traditionally accomplished using standard paperwork. This fact makes construction safety, and all of its associated paper-based forms, the perfect place to start.

Construction safety technology

Construction safety technology has been evolving quickly. As recently as five years ago, safety documentation was static, using triPLICATE forms and spreadsheets to communicate information among team members. This process is not only time-consuming but also quite tedious. Luckily, there is an opportunity for construction safety professionals to look to smart devices, and the cloud-based applications they run, to lift their paper-based processes into the digital age.

Using document-management options such as Dropbox, Google Drive and Box, the user can complete a safety form, save it to the cloud and then access said form from another location, all in real-time.
Send your construction safety processes to the cloud

If your team is interested in adding some software to your construction safety tool belt, but is unsure where to start, here are some ideas to get your wheels turning.

1. Safety inspections
In most cases, you are required to complete weekly site safety inspections. Once the inspection has been completed, it is sent back to the head office for a project or safety manager to review. The data generated from this process can be tremendously difficult to analyze if these forms are paper-based because the information is static. Conversely, when the inspection results are recorded using software, they become easier to search, sort and manage.

2. Logging safety observations
Because of the ongoing nature of safety observations, this process is a perfect place to add some magic from the cloud. Because safety observations are best recorded as they are noticed, paper-based processes can get in the way of accuracy. Giving safety professionals a way to instantly record any safety observation in real-time will go a long way towards increased safety on-site and a more thorough paper trail.

3. Equipment tracking
Often overlooked is the status and location of on-site equipment. Every day, site staff spend time looking for, moving and repairing equipment. This process is not only inefficient, but also potentially dangerous as it pertains to scheduled equipment maintenance.

By storing all equipment location, maintenance and use information in one central location that workers can access on the go, teams can ensure they know where the required equipment is and when it last underwent maintenance.

Rob McKinney is a Construction Risk Engineer at XL Catlin in Atlanta, Georgia and a construction technology consultant and blogger. Find him online at conappguru.com for more resources and reviews related to construction technology.

Identify the opportunities
When looking to enhance your company’s construction safety practices using software and cloud-based workflows it’s important to first identify the opportunities for process changes and then begin looking for software options that fit those processes.

Often, you will be able to make some initial changes, such as moving to cloud-based document management, without incurring a large overhead cost. From there, your team will be able to identify which processes need more sophisticated solutions such as mobile apps and cloud-based software built specifically for construction safety.
Safety IT’S ALSO GOOD FOR BUSINESS

As an industry, our discussion on health and safety issues, rightly, focus on the impact to the wellbeing of the people on our jobsites. This is a human issue that affects men and women every day. But there’s a business case to be made for health and safety as well. It’s one that touches on less tangible things such as corporate reputation, employee absenteeism and happier workers.

Here are our ten reasons why you need to buy into health and safety.

1. **Lower employee turnover.**
   It’s been shown time and again that when people feel happy and safe at work, they tend to stay loyal to their employers.

2. **Reduced absenteeism.**
   When people are at work, they’re, well, working. Less downtime means more productivity and better returns for your company.

3. **Reduced risks.**
   Training helps your employees understand, and avoid, situations that could lead to sexual harassment, workplace violence and discrimination.

4. **Reduced repairs.**
   Safer working practices usually cause less wear and tear on machines and more efficient use of materials.

5. **Lower fines, lower insurance claims.**
   Protect profits by staying on the right side of the law. A sterling health and safety reputation keeps you out of court and goes a long way to keeping your WSIB premiums down. With all due respect to the courts, fines are a waste of money!

6. **Tailor-made succession plans.**
   By keeping your employees up to date on the latest training, they’re able to rise up through your organization to fill critical roles and perform important functions without the need for additional training.

7. **It shows you care.**
   Nothing is more unappealing to people than someone who says one thing and does another. Don’t be “committed to health and safety” without actually being committed to it. Do what you say.

8. **It shows attention to detail.**
   A thorough contractor that maintains a clean site and follows all rules is probably also one that pays attention to the documents he’s bidding and builds with care and attention to detail.
Owners, consultants, general contractors, subtrades and suppliers will be more keen to work with companies with proven health and safety records, as opposed to ones with spotty histories. More partners means better teams, reduced construction costs and, hopefully, better profit margins.

A strong safety culture, where people are encouraged to look after one another, and stop the conveyor belt, so to speak, when they see something wrong builds confidence in your workers. That in turn makes them better able to make important decisions on the fly and under challenging conditions.

9. Happier jobsite partners.

10. It’s empowering.

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Managing third-party risk

In today’s competitive business environment, construction companies are placing greater reliance on their contract-based relationships. Companies depend on a wide range of outside business partners, licensees, vendors and service providers to control costs, generate revenue and realize other objectives. While contracts may help them reach these goals, many companies do not consider all the risks these agreements represent. At the end of the day, you may have contracts and third-party arrangements in place, but you may ultimately be responsible if your objectives are not achieved.

1. Evaluate your current contract compliance program

Engage with internal stakeholders concerned with risk mitigation, including legal, internal audit, supply chain/procurement and finance. Clearly document and evaluate the process for contract compliance and review the results with stakeholders. It’s important to discuss whether the program supports both current and emerging business risks. Many companies fail to look back and update older contracts, which leaves a significant amount of exposure.

Next, determine what internal and external changes affect risk, and identify deficient practices and control weaknesses. This involves understanding third-party risks, conflicts of interest, and policies and procedures. Many companies fail to assess such risks or contractually mitigate them to ensure they are not passed back to their company.

Finally, monitor changes in legislation, statutes and industry trends to stay ahead of the compliance curve, and ensure these changes are captured in third-party contracts accordingly. Consideration should be given to including third-party and contract risk into your overall enterprise risk management framework.

2. Redesign (or design) the program

Once you evaluate your contract compliance programs and inventory current and potential future risks, build a detailed master plan. In many cases, this will involve a redesign of an existing compliance program that is not sufficiently comprehensive. However, it might also mean designing a new program. This is also the time to rewrite or establish clear and comprehensive policies, procedures and processes for the program. It’s useful to incorporate an analytical framework to assess risk factors and strategic direction.

Whether you are designing a new program or redesigning an existing one, it’s critical to establish management ownership and program leadership. This type of buy-in will give you the flexibility you need to adjust your contract compliance program as required. It can also strengthen your ability to manage any company resistance to change. Successful change relies not only on leadership from above, but also on buy-in from middle- and lower-level management.
A contract compliance program stays ahead of risks as they emerge, which requires redefining the company’s approach and policies as needs change. This can’t be a “set it and forget it” compliance program. Adapting the program requires building reporting structures and automating data collection to establish structured communication and status reporting. Then, as issues arise, the contract compliance program should be revisited regularly. Companies need to continuously monitor their contracts and be ready to make process changes.

It can be extremely helpful to leverage technology and tools, such as data analytics/business intelligence, performance measurements and risk indicators, to maximize results and support decision-making. These tools can help you harness data that can inform your decisions about risk, while helping you improve the customer experience.

This article was written by David Florio, Partner, Operational Advisory with Grant Thornton LLP. He can be reached at 416 369 6415 and David.Florio@ca.gt.com.

As the pace of competitive, regulatory and technological change continues to accelerate, companies will need robust contract compliance programs to mitigate their third-party risks. The key will be to strike a balance between having a formalized process that evaluates all relevant risks while remaining flexible enough to adapt to changes in the external environment or the strategic direction of the company and its stakeholders.
Nelson Oliveira, CJs Express President, worked the first year of his apprenticeship with his father in 1996. He went on to complete his apprenticeship with Conestogo Mechanical Inc. before taking a role as foreman for all types of plumbing and mechanical jobs.

When John announced he was thinking about retiring in 2013, Nelson realized this was an opportunity to take over the family business and advance it to the next level.

"By this time I was very knowledgeable and comfortable with new construction, high rise, industrial and any type of heavy mechanical and plumbing work such as cooling towers, boilers, chillers and all types of plumbing," says Nelson. "My experience had been in the plumbing area but also in the heavy commercial side of the industry. That is where I want the growth at CJs to come from.

Nelson appreciates the benefits of continuing education and is just about to begin his Gold Seal certification in construction management. Along with continuing to take industry related courses, he believes that keeping on top of all the safety issues is paramount for success.

"My experience as a foreman on commercial mechanical jobs at Conestogo has provided me with a great deal of confidence working in the field on all aspects of the job from ordering materials, to progress reports, to making sure that the site is safe and that projects are completed on time as per the contract," he says.

"We do a lot of training throughout the year. We take this very seriously and we make sure that we have quality equipment on site to give us that advantage of efficiency. We have our daily job box talks and look for any potential problems on a site that we need to address. Our internal weekly safety talks focus on different topics such as moving heavy equipment on site, ladders, high visibility vests – we want to make sure our crews understand workplace safety and compliance. We will continue to focus on midsize commercial work and I want to ensure that every job is completed 100 percent properly today, tomorrow and in years to come."

Founded in 1996 by John Oliveira, CJs Express Plumbing and Electrical Ltd. began as a light commercial plumbing company that travelled Ontario doing work for box stores such as Sobey's and Food Basics. They worked on new and renovated stores and took 24-hour emergency service calls.

GVCA Journal profile lottery winner CJ Express's new business direction has not required compromising the things that matter the most to them.
The Grand Valley Construction Association is an approved sponsor of the WSIB Safety Group Program.

Improving safety and improving the bottom line. Through the Safety Groups program, the GVCA and the Workplace Insurance Board (WSIB) are working together to help you do just that. GVCA Safety Group members consistently score high in audits. In 2013, the GVCA was the highest scoring group among construction safety groups in Ontario and members received a total rebate of $477,193. In 2014 the GVCA was awarded the Canadian Construction Association’s National Safety Award.
5-Steps to Managing Health and Safety

1. Written Standard
2. Communication
3. Training
4. Evaluate
5. Acknowledge Success and Make Improvements

To manage an effective health and safety program in the workplace, a cycle of continuous improvement must be followed.

The Safety Group Program is a five year program that runs on a calendar year. After five years, successful firms will have a health and safety program with 25 complete elements aligned with their workplace needs and legislation.

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Proud Member of the GVCA Safety Groups.
The Safety Groups Program

The Safety Groups Program (SGP) is an innovative initiative the WSIB has implemented to help eliminate workplace injuries and illnesses in Ontario. The program is voluntary and rewards firms that implement effective health and safety and return to work measures into their daily business.

Safety Groups is based on the premise that a well-integrated workplace health and safety program is good for business. Firms from similar or different businesses or rate groups volunteer to join a safety group with a collective purpose: to learn from each other’s experience in implementing injury and illness prevention programs. Firms that invest and implement effective health and safety programs can benefit from a WSIB financial incentive.

Each safety group has a sponsor. Sponsors are approved by the WSIB to administer the SGP and to facilitate and support workplace self-reliance in health and safety and return to work programs. Current sponsors represent over 40 employer groups which meet throughout Ontario.

The role of the sponsor is to oversee the group and regularly report to the WSIB. They promote the group’s interaction and networking by organizing meetings and leadership workshops. They offer guidance on action plan development and track the individual firm’s and the group’s achievements.

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Safety Group Program Annual Cycle

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, firms are required to maintain their elements from the previous year and pick five new ones.

Research Findings

Over three consecutive years, the WSIB surveyed employer participants to gauge their perceptions about the SGP. In determining the perceived value of the SGP, employers, over time, have looked to the SGP more and more, as a source of expert advice, and a venue for networking and developing a positive business image.

Overall satisfaction with the program delivery has increased over the three years. Most notable increases in satisfaction were in the areas like sponsor assistance, sharing of resources and information, and program administration.

Safety insight promotes safety on site!

Applauding GVCA Safety Groups for a strong commitment to building safe and healthy workplaces.

Everyone deserves a safe return home at the end of the day.

Safety is a Group Concern!
Benefits to participating in Safety Groups

- Keep Ontario workers safe
- Increase competitiveness
- Fewer WSIB claims
- More effective Return to Work
- Enhance employee morale
- Increase productivity and improve quality
- Access to health & safety resources
- Best practices through networking
- Structured approach for a sustainable health & safety program
- Create and nurture a safety culture in the workplace
- Earn financial incentive

Incentive Criteria
Potential 6% maximum rebate of group premiums based on two group factors:

1. Achievement
   Scores are subject to a performance improvement threshold.

2. Performance
   Improvement must be better than a pre-set target, reviewed annually.

Building Partnerships as a Mechanical Contractor in Bid Specification and Specializing in Design/Build since 1985
April 28 is the National Day of Mourning. It is the day that men and women from all walks of life and across all industries gather to mourn for the dead and fight for the living. The sad reality of the event is that the number of workplace deaths in Canada remains stubbornly high. The latest figures show that in 2013, 902 people, more than four every working day, died as a result of their jobs. That figure is only slightly below the average of 953 for the four-year period ending in 2013.

Hundreds of workers, union leaders and politicians gathered at Cambridge’s Riverside Park to commemorate this year’s National Day of Mourning at an event hosted by the Waterloo Regional Labour Council (WRLC).

Darlene Wilson, chair of the council’s health & safety committee, spoke of the need for governments to take stronger action to enforce federal and provincial health and safety laws.

“There continues to be a serious lack of commitment on behalf of governments at the provincial and especially at the federal level to enforce health and safety protections that we have fought so hard for, such as the right to refuse unsafe work,” she told the audience. “Workers face dangers every day on the job: toxic chemicals, workplace violence, stress, disease, falls from heights, and faulty equipment. Prevention of injuries from these and other dangers needs to be a top priority in everyone’s workplace. Safe work is not a privilege. It’s a right.”

RLC president Marc Xuereb suggested that the official figures of workplace injuries and deaths may be misleading. Injuries and illnesses that go unreported, or for which workers’ compensation boards, such as the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, do not allow claims.

“Hundreds more die each year, but their suffering, and those of their family members, is not officially recognized,” he said. “It seems a fair and reasonable thing to ask that workers come home from work at the end of every day. It also seems fair and reasonable to expect that employers be held to their promise to protect their workers. We can do better. We have to.”

National Day of Mourning ceremonies give us cause to think of the real impacts of workplace deaths, and to renew our commitments to make workplaces even safer.

The latest figures show that in 2013, 902 people, more than four every working day, died as a result of their jobs.
Days of Mourning across the province

Officials across Ontario echoed much the same messages in their statements on the National Day of Mourning. In the past year, 233 people in Ontario were killed at work or died from an occupational disease.

Chief Prevention Officer George Gritziotis said it is “totally unacceptable” that the number of annual workplace deaths has not declined in an appreciable way over the past ten years. “We, as supervisors, employers, unions, regulators, and system partners need to increase our resolve by working together to protect and strengthen health and safety in all workplaces in Ontario,” he said. “To honour the memories of the victims, we must make good on our commitment to eliminate workplace injuries and fatalities once and for all. Success is attainable if we work together towards this common goal. I ask all Ontarians to reflect on how they can contribute to make workplaces and communities healthier and safer, and then to act on that reflection.”

WSIB chair Elizabeth Witmer attended a memorial in Toronto alongside Premier Kathleen Wynne, Labour Minister Kevin Flynn and the mother of a man who was killed at work in 2010. “Today we come together to remember and honour the many workers who have suffered workplace injuries, occupational diseases or lost their lives while on the job,” she said. “Today we are reminded of the terrible human, social and economic toll that workplace illnesses, injuries and fatalities can take on families, friends and communities. Today we must reaffirm and rededicate ourselves to the task of doing all we can to eliminate workplace injuries, occupational diseases and fatalities and make our workplaces healthy and safe.

“It seems a fair and reasonable thing to ask that workers come home from work at the end of every day. It also seems fair and reasonable to expect that employers be held to their promise to protect their workers. We can do better. We have to.”

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GVCA Journal May/June 2015
National Day of Mourning
Every 6 months GVCA will draw from names entered into the Member Company Profile Lottery giving each entrant 3 draw chances to be profiled in one of the upcoming issues of the GVCA Journal.

Cost to enter $50.00

Next lottery deadline is July 31st

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To purchase a ticket please email: admin@gvca.org
If the idea of travelling to one of the greatest cities in South America appeals to you, then maybe it’s time you considered attending the GVCA’s 2016 Educational Meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Your six-day stay in the city known as the “Paris of South America” begins on October 23 after an overnight flight from Toronto the night before. You’ll spend the day orienting yourself in your new surroundings both on your own and via a private city orientation tour. The day concludes with a spectacular welcome reception and dinner.

October 24 starts with a special business session and then tours of the city by coach, carriage, car or cycle, your choice. On October 25, you’ll explore the underground city of El Zanjón de Granados. The site dates back to the early 18th century, but was lost for generations before being found in the 1980s, and lovingly restored.

Two tours highlight your day on October 26: one to the majestic Iguazu Falls near the border of Brazil, or another to Colonia del Sacramento, a UNESCO World Heritage Site just across the Río de la Plata in Uruguay. Follow up that with dinner and a tango show!

On the last full day of the tour, you can pick from several optional activities: antique shopping at Palermo, a tour of the northern suburbs and a boat ride to Tigre, or a backstage tour at Colon Opera House and a visit to Juan Carlos Palloros Museum & Workshop. The day ends with a formal dinner before you travel home to Canada in the afternoon of October 28.

Booking for this very special tour starts soon. Check with the GVCA office for information. Spaces are limited and these tours do sell out. Don’t delay!
Statement by Chief Prevention Officer

George Gritziotis

I

n the past three weeks, the number of falls from heights in Ontario workplaces has been absolutely unacceptable. We have had too many fatalities and critical injuries.

These incidents are needless, intolerable tragedies that must stop!

We are continually seeing people lose their lives as a result of falls, specifically in the construction sector. What’s most tragic is that these people are simply trying to earn a living. Instead they are risking their lives.

It’s the law that individuals who work at heights wear appropriate fall arrest equipment and take working at heights training. For employers that don’t comply, the ministry will apply the full force of the law.

We have to break the cycle of fatalities in our construction sector.

As of April 1, 2015, employers must ensure that certain workers complete working at heights training that has been approved by the Chief Prevention Officer.

The training requirement is for workers on construction projects who use any of the following methods of fall protection:

- travel restraint systems
- fall restricting systems
- fall arrest systems
- safety nets
- work belts or safety belts

Our health and safety inspectors have been concentrating on fall hazards during their inspections, with a special focus on sloped roofing work in the residential construction sector. Inspectors will also be checking for proof of training for those who are working at heights.

Everyone has a responsibility for safety.

I am calling on all supervisors, employers, unions, and regulators to substantially increase their efforts for health and safety at construction workplace in Ontario.

We all have a responsibility to do everything within our power to ensure that workers return home safe at the end of every workday.

Editor’s note: This statement was issued by the office of the Chief Prevention Officer in response to a series of falls that occurred on construction sites in March and April, and which killed three workers and seriously injured a fourth.
By now you’ve heard that Ontario has a new standard in place for Working at Heights (WAH) training. The standard came into affect on April 1, and has caused a stir in the industry. People across the province are worried that capacity does not exist for the training, and that they could be waiting to get training for their workers well into the summer months.

“There is an increasing number of providers out there,” he said. “We’re up to 17 certified organizations now. Some of those entities have as many as 100 or 200 instructors in the field. So the capacity they have to perform training is greater than a cursory search might show. I’d encourage anyone looking for WAH training to visit the providers’ websites to see what capacity each offers.”

There are two other problems that are perhaps inflating demand for WAH training. The first is a misunderstanding that all workers have to meet the new standard right away. They don’t. Anyone who already has approved fall protection training, and can prove it on site, can delay training to the new WAH standard for two years. Only new workers, or those that cannot prove training to previous standards have to re-certify.

The other factor that could be inflating demand is contractors’ unwillingness to take training from providers with whom they’ve not previously worked. Some companies are turning to the providers that they’re most familiar with for training and are encountering long delays as a result. Gritziotis encourages contractors to consult with any of the CPO-approved trainers for opportunities. He adds that more trainers will soon be approved.

Need Working at Heights training but don’t know where to look? Visit www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/wah_providers.php for a complete list of CPO-approved trainers.
Joint Health and Safety Committee standard

Standards for Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) training were released to industry for comment a year ago and are now in the process of being finalized. The CPO office expects to release those new standards in the fall. The update marks the first time since 1996 these standards have been revised. The purpose is to promote high quality and consistent training of certified JHSC members.

The new standards and certification requirements would include: part one training that would be generic to all workplaces where certified JHSC members are required, regardless of sector, and would have to be taken from an approved training provider, and part two training that would be sector-specific and would be formalized with approved training programs taken from approved training providers.

“Just as we did for WAH, we will allow time for the industry to transition to the new standard and to allow enough training capacity to be ready for the initial rush,” says Gritziotis. “We also may be building in exceptions to the training rule that may allow a contractor to complete both training modules over a period longer than the six months we initially proposed, as a result of extenuating circumstances.”

Mandatory Entry Level Training

The Mandatory Entry Level Training program is aimed at young workers and those who are new to construction sites. The aim of the program is to bring them up to speed on basic, need-to-know construction-type information. It offers a basic overview of hazards in 13 areas of work, among them fall prevention, ladders and work platforms, materials handling in construction, and common tools in construction.

That said, Gritziotis is careful to point out that entry-level training means just that.

“Workers must understand that this is not the last health and safety training course they will ever take,” he says. “This program is akin to something like construction 101. It is a foundational piece for anyone new to the industry, whether a new worker, an older worker from another industry, or someone new to Ontario, who needs to learn about their rights and responsibilities and who must receive basic training to work safely on a site.”

The CPO office expects to release the content of the standard and an accompanying regulatory proposal late in the spring or early in the summer, with an expected coming-into-force date of next summer, again with a transition period to ease the industry along.

“Most employers already offer this kind of safety information to new workers as a matter of course,” says Gritziotis. “The new standard may include exemptions for anyone who has already taken equivalent training.”

Accreditation and other items

New training standards aren’t the only initiatives underway at the CPO office. The group is also reviewing the various incentives and accreditation programs in place, across all industries, to determine a new standard of excellence for health and safety performance.

“The Safety Groups program helped to bring companies to a minimum level of compliance for health and safety performance. Now we’re considering what’s next. What is that higher standard of accreditation that demonstrates excellence in health and safety performance.”

Gritziotis says the Certificate of Recognition program may be part of the answer for construction, but different standards exist for industries such as mining, or even residential construction.

Finally, Gritziotis himself has been appointed by the Minister of Labour to head up the construction advisory panel that will develop a health and safety action plan for the industry. Look for more details on that program in the coming months.

Anyone who already has approved fall protection training – and can prove it on site – can delay training to the new WAH standard for two years.
WSIB proposes new rate framework plan

Fed up with paying too much for WSIB premiums and your inability to affect the money you pay? You’re not alone. The WSIB recently announced a plan to modernize its rate-setting framework. Initial reactions from industry are positive, but the plan is a long way from implementation yet.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) recently presented a new plan for the modernization of its rate framework, and it’s reaching out to employers and workers across the province for feedback.

The new proposed preliminary rate framework model is based on the work performed by Doug Stanley during his review of the way in which the board calculates employer premiums. Instead of the existing system which groups similar employers together (based on the notion that all electricians work in the same fashion), but which doesn’t significantly account for variances in safety records or levels of risk, the proposed framework aims to re-allocate premiums more closely in line with costs and experiences. It therefore means that a company with a poorer safety record will pay more, while those that take greater steps to improve health and safety, and which demonstrates good track records, will see their premiums decrease.

By the WSIB’s own admission, part of the problem with the existing model is its responsiveness. More than 60 percent of Ontario employers could do nothing to lower their premiums, regardless of how innovative they were in the health and safety field and of how well they performed on the job. With few if any rewards available, these employers could be discouraged from striving to improve their performances. What’s more, rebates and surcharges were applied to employers’ histories only annually. So good performers had to wait for their rebates, while poorer ones faced looming surcharges.

The proposed new framework overhauls the existing model. It classifies companies first according to the new North American Industry Classification System model, as opposed to the Standard Industry Classification system that was created in the 1980s. It would create as many as 22 groups (of which construction would be one), and then build individualized profiles for a
company's risk level (based on its claims cost and insurable earnings) and predictability of experience (based on its injury claims) to determine the extent to which its premium will be affected by its claims history. Once that profile is created, the board will compare a company's safety record to those of its peers in the same group. The result will be a final set of premiums that closely reflects a company's performance against its peers and which fluctuates in line with the company's improved or worsening safety performance.

Ian Cunningham, president of the Council of Ontario Construction Associations (COCA), is pleased with the proposal.

"The framework seems to balance stability with responsiveness, which is good," he says. "It reacts to an employer's good or bad performance, while also giving companies the baselines they need to carefully plan their premium costs a year or more ahead of time."

Don't get too excited about the plan coming into effect any time soon, Cunningham adds. Implementation of the framework won't likely be until 2018 at the earliest. To its credit, the WSIB wants to be sure the new plan works well for as many employers and workers as possible. It is therefore taking its time to get the plan right.

The WSIB is actively seeking input from industry stakeholders. Anyone interested may reach out to the board via a number of channels. The board also offers two excellent videos that explain the new proposed rate framework plan at www.wsib.on.ca.
A few months ago, a safety talk on heat stress would have been laughable. However, while heat stress can occur indoors at any time of year depending on the workplace, more workers will be facing this hazard now that the temperature outdoors is rising. Workers are at the greatest risk of developing a heat-related illness in early spring, before their bodies have become acclimatized to the heat. Acclimatization usually takes six to seven days and may be lost in as little as three days.

**Explain dangers**
When your body’s cooling system can’t keep up with the heat, you dehydrate and your temperature rises above 38°C. That’s when you can get heat-related illnesses such as:
- heat rash (plugged sweat glands)
- heat cramps (sweating has caused salt loss)
- heat exhaustion
- heat stroke (very serious, you can die).

Let’s take a look at two serious heat illnesses: heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

**Heat exhaustion**
Heat exhaustion is when your body cannot keep blood flowing both to vital organs and to the skin for cooling.

**Symptoms**
- weakness, feeling faint
- headache
- breathlessness
- nausea or vomiting
- difficulty continuing work.

**Treatment**
Get medical aid and cool down (move to a shaded area, loosen clothing, drink cool water).

It takes 30 minutes at least to cool the body down from heat exhaustion, and if it’s not treated promptly, it can lead to heat stroke.

**Heat stroke**
Heat stroke is a medical emergency. You can die from it. Your body has used up all its water and salt and cannot cool itself. Your temperature rises to dangerous levels.

**Symptoms**
- confusion and irrational behaviour
- convulsions
- unconsciousness
- no sweating, hot, dry skin
- high body temperature, 40°C or more.

**Treatment**
If a co-worker shows symptoms of heat stroke, you should act fast.
- Call the local emergency number or get the worker to a hospital.
- Take aggressive steps to cool the worker down (immerse in a tub of cool water or cool shower, spray with a hose, wrap in cool, wet sheets and fan rapidly).
- If the worker is unconscious, don’t give anything to drink.

**Identify controls**
Here’s how to avoid heat stress in the first place:
- Wear light, loose clothing that allows sweat to evaporate. Light-coloured garments absorb less heat from the sun.
- Drink small amounts of water (8 oz) every half hour. Don’t wait until you’re thirsty.
- Avoid coffee, tea, beer, or other drinks that make you go to the bathroom frequently.
- Avoid eating hot, heavy meals that increase your body temperature.
- Remember that your physical condition can reduce your ability to deal with the heat. Age, weight, fitness, health conditions (heart disease or high blood pressure), recent illness, or medications can all affect your ability to withstand high temperatures.

**IHSA Safety Talk:**
Heat Stress

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IHSA Safety Talk:

**Sun Protection**

**Explain dangers**

At some point, we’ve all been burned by the sun.

Sunburn is the effect of ultraviolet (UV) radiation on the skin. Ultraviolet light is beaming down on us every day, and always has. But now there’s less protective ozone in the atmosphere and risks of exposure have increased. UV rays are more powerful than visible light rays. They’re so powerful that they can cause cancer. Ultraviolet radiation can also cause cataracts, other eye damage, and premature aging of the skin.

When you work in the sun, especially in spring and summer, you need to minimize the hazards of UV exposure.

**Identify controls**

- Wear a shirt and long pants to cover most of your skin.
- Protect the rest of your skin with sunscreen. Use SPF 30 or higher. Follow the instructions about how often to reapply. Don’t forget your ears. The more you sweat, the more often you need to reapply sunscreen.
- Protect your eyes. Wear safety sunglasses if the tint doesn’t interfere with your vision. (Most safety glasses, clear or tinted, decrease your UV exposure.)
- Avoid contact with substances known to cause photosensitization, such as coal tar.

SPF stands for Sun Protection Factor. Multiply the SPF number by 10 to know how many minutes you can stay in the sun without burning. Use a UV-blocking lip balm too.

Sunlight doesn’t have to be direct to do damage. Light reflected off surfaces such as sand, water, concrete, and snow can also cause UV exposure.

Weather reports now include a UV index. This gives you an idea of how intense the ultraviolet radiation will be under clear sunshine or light cloud. When the index is high (7 or higher) you can get sunburned in only 15 to 20 minutes. The highest exposure of the day is from noon to 2 pm.

Sunscreen should be standard equipment for anyone working in construction during spring and summer. Keep a bottle handy in your toolbox. Pass around bottle or tube of sunscreen (30 SPF or higher) and ask crew to apply it to exposed skin.

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‘All it takes is one bad day’

Carissa Tanzola practices labour and employment law for employers with the firm Sherrard Kuzz LLP. She says she sees all too often construction clients who think they’ve done enough to build robust health and safety systems, who feel that complying with stringent legislation can get in the way of productivity or that a workplace accident won’t happen to them. Part of Tanzola’s job is to make these companies reconsider their approaches to health and safety and to get them thinking of how to be proactive rather than reactive.

“[Construction companies] have to understand the consequences of one bad day,” she says. “That’s all it takes for a site accident to occur and for the costs of that accident to snowball.”

Tanzola is quick to point out that most employers have the best intentions when it comes to developing and implementing occupational health and safety programs, but sometimes there are a few things that must be shored up in order to make a good program better.

Construction sites are dangerous work environments. Twenty people died on construction sites in Ontario last year. Our industry is recognized as being high risk, and it is a frequent target for inspections by the Ministry of Labour, which regularly blitzes for violations of any number of safety laws: working at heights, trenching hazards, heavy-equipment operation, struck-by hazards, and the list goes on.

As a result, the Occupational Health and Safety Act sets out clear responsibilities for owners, constructors, employers and supervisors to account for the wellbeing of the workers in their care. Those duties include specific requirements such as advising workers of potential or actual dangers, and broader ones such as taking “every reasonable precaution” to protect workers. But even with those best intentions in place in law and in mind, things sometimes go wrong. And they can have disastrous consequences.

Setting aside the tragedy that is a lost human life, the damage done to a company’s bottom line and its reputation as a result of a fatal on-site accident can be immense.

“Penalties are getting stiffer and fines are skyrocketing,” says Tanzola.

Indeed, a guilty finding in court can lead to fines of as much as $25,000 per charge per individual (plus a mandatory 25-percent victim fine surcharge) and 12 months imprisonment. For corporations, penalties rise to as much as $500,000 per charge (plus the victim fine surcharge).
Fines are usually applied subjectively, according to variables such as the size of the company, what it can afford, the value of the construction project, the issue of public interest. But recently, they have crept higher. Tanzola says that might have something to do with the crown more vigorously pursuing the maximum penalties for violations as a way of confirming the seriousness with which the government treats such cases.

“Metron Construction, for example, was fined $750,000 for criminal negligence for its actions leading to the death of four workers on Christmas Eve in 2009,” she says. “Swing N Scaff, the company that supplied the swing stage that collapsed in that same accident, was fined $350,000 and one of its directors was fined $50,000 [for two charges]. Those are huge sums of money.

And they’re only the beginning of the penalties a company can pay as a result of such an incident. The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, for example, can levy a surcharge as a result of a poor injury record and in the case of a fatality, withhold any refund that an employer may have otherwise been entitled to. Even the smallest accident can stay on an employer’s books for years, costing them thousands of dollars annually. Additional damage is done to the company’s brand and reputation through the media, a fact that can make the company less attractive to prospective workers and jobsite partners.

**Protecting yourself**

It’s not easy to protect yourself and your company from the consequences of a site accident. Once the horse is out of the barn, all you can do is corral it. Companies can fall back on due diligence as a defence, but even that is difficult to establish conclusively.

“In order to bring a due diligence defence, the defendant (whether a company or an individual) must argue that it took all reasonable precautions to avoid the offence,” says Tanzola. “That includes proving that all precautions that were reasonable under the circumstances were taken and that the employer met a reasonable level of judgment care and prudence.”

Some of the elements of a due diligence defence include being able to demonstrate that you had written policies, practices and procedures in place, that all supervisors were competent, that the site was monitored for safety violations and rules were enforced, that accidents are investigated and reported on, and that all of the above is documented.

“Document, document, document,” says Tanzola. “Start by getting workers to sign off on your health and safety policy, confirm that they attended tool box talks, ensure all policies are up to date, educate and re-educate workers about their health and safety responsibilities, make sure everyone participates in the health and safety programming, assume an inspector will visit your site at any time, and make safety and accident prevention an integral part of your business.”

There is no more serious occurrence than a life lost on a worksite. Do everything you can to ensure that such an event doesn’t happen on your site. Don’t put off safety as just another burdensome administrative function. The risks to your workers and your company are too great to ignore.

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EVENTS CALENDAR

June 18
GVCA Annual Golf Tournament. Conestoga Golf Course

June 19 & 26
GVCA Breakfast and Lunch Club

July 23
LinC Golf Day
Conestoga Golf Course - registration required

August 25
WinC Golf Tournament
Whistle Bear Golf Course - registration required

September 10
GVCA Annual Chair’s Event/Open House
Registration required

October 15
Oktoberfest Corporate Night
Concordia Club - Tickets available for purchase at the GVCA

November 6
Random Act of Kindness Day
One day that creates a kinder place to work, live and play. Over 101 ideas of Random Acts that can be done on this day, can be found on www.gvca.org. Contact GVCA to get involved!

December 10
GVCA Christmas Lunch
Holiday Inn, Kitchener - Registration required

EDUCATION CALENDAR

June 24
Emergency First Aid & CPR Training

September 23 – December 9
A five module program including courses on managing injured workers, taking care of ‘bad seeds’ in your company, handling workplace violence and harassment, mental health, and construction management.

October 1 & 8
Construction 101 — Earn 2 Gold Seal Credits

October 15
Take the entire series and earn 2 Gold Seal credits

October 16
Gold Seal Examination

October 29
Construction Financial Series Part 2: Basic Budgeting
Take the entire series and earn 2 Gold Seal credits

November 12
Construction Financial Series Part 3: Job Costing
Take the entire series and earn 2 Gold Seal credits

November 17, 18, 24 & 25
Construction Project Management 201. Earn 5 Gold Seal credits

November 26
Construction Financial Series Part 4: Managing Changes and Extras
Take the entire series and earn 2 Gold Seal credits

2016
Navigating Your Health & Safety Audit Program
Monthly meetings beginning January 2016

TO REGISTER
To register, or request additional information please contact admin@gvca.org
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