



Through comprehensive training programs and safety awareness demonstrations, as pictured here, the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association has helped to develop an effective safety culture across the province.  
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## SCSA promotes safety culture across province's construction sector

**ANDREW LIVINGSTONE**  
POSTMEDIA CONTENT WORKS

Having observed the devastating cost of workplace injuries, Saskatchewan's construction industry collaborated 21 years ago to form the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA). Since then, the industry-funded organization has worked diligently to transform safety culture and now represents nearly 9,000 member companies in Saskatchewan.

Collin Pullar, President of the SCSA, strives to help companies realize the benefits and competitive advantages of developing a safety culture and implementing a safety management system.

Pullar says there are three main reasons for companies to invest in safety. The first is simple and obvious: there are regulations compelling them to do so.

The second is the human factor. Concerned employers want the best for their staff and strive to prevent workplace injury and suffering.

The third reason? Implementing a safety management system will improve a company's bottom line. "It makes good business sense," said Pullar, who says the empirical evidence demonstrates that companies are more profitable when they protect their financial, material and human assets.

"I have a graph that shows Workers' Compensation Board premium rates that, in 1997, were as high as \$11 per \$100 (of

insurable earnings) in the construction sector. Today, most Saskatchewan companies are paying premiums under \$2 (per \$100 of insurable earnings)."

When multiplied against an annual payroll of \$2 billion, lower WCB premiums translate into significant savings for the Saskatchewan construction industry.

The process of implementing safety standards can also enhance the overall efficiency of a company. "Companies that have really focused on safety and managing safety methodically in their organizations often become better-run businesses," said Pullar. "Because they take the time to be methodical in one area of their business, they carry that habit over into their marketing, branding, recruitment, how they manage their finances — it becomes one of the attributes of a well-managed business."

Education is the first step toward implementing a safety management system. The SCSA offers dozens of training courses throughout Saskatchewan. "We've got offices in Regina and Saskatoon, with physical classrooms in both of those cities.

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We have direct, in-class delivery, and we also will do delivery on sites in different parts of the province," said Pullar.

The comprehensive training programs cover a diverse range of skills, from Fall Protection Training to WHMIS Train the Trainer courses.

Online training is also offered in three different categories: Construction Health and Safety; Environmental Safety and Professional Development. The SCSA also developed an online Safety Construction Orientation Training (SCOT®) course specifically for the Saskatchewan construction industry. The SCSA SCOT for Schools program provides this orientation training to students at no charge to prepare them for entry into the workforce.

With the completion of mandatory training courses, a company can apply for the Certificate of Recognition (COR™). "A company can earn a national Certificate of Recognition which identifies that a company has taken the required training and that they have put into place a safety management system," said Pullar. Once that process is complete, the SCSA continues to provide ongoing consulting and auditing to the certified companies to assist in the process of implementing change. Currently, 362 Saskatchewan construction companies have attained COR certification through the SCSA.

For individual managers, the SCSA offers the National Construction Safety Officer (NCSO) program. "That allows them to have the skills to be able to manage a safety program for a company," said Pullar. "It requires a number of courses plus some practical application and years of experience in order to earn that, but, as supervisors who work on site, they now have the skills to be able to recognize hazards and have the tools to be able to meet the obligations under legislation."

One result of better-educated management is a marked decline in premiums paid to the Workers' Compensation Board.

"We've had companies that have come in with terrible injury situations, which have resulted in higher rates for them at a company level. We've worked with them to establish a system, establish practices in their workplace and provide guidance to their employees and supervisors, and, over time, they've been able to reduce their premium rates," said Pullar.

To increase awareness about the importance of workplace safety, the association offers attention-grabbing safety demonstrations to industry members and the public alike. "We have five or six key demonstrations that we take throughout the whole province, whether it be at work sites, schools or places that would be really impactful for people," said Pullar. These demos include comparisons of the effects of wearing proper and improper fall protection and other personal protective equipment. Simulations of falls at heights using a custom-engineered trailer and life-sized dummy, along with other common workplace injuries to the head, hand, back and eyes are performed to underscore the real physics behind the regulations.

Pullar is quick to acknowledge that his organization isn't alone in the battle against workplace injuries. "Yes, it's through what we're doing, but also through WorkSafe Saskatchewan, through Safe Saskatchewan and the Mission Zero charter," he said. "It's a collaboration. We provide the training to companies, but the companies themselves take the lead on making it happen."



**SASKATCHEWAN CONSTRUCTION SAFETY ASSOCIATION**

498 Henderson Drive, Regina, SK  
Tel: 306.525.0175

2606 Koyl Avenue, Saskatoon, SK  
Tel: 306.652.0907

Toll-Free: 1.800.817.2079 • www.scsaonline.ca