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Government Services

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OHS Branch Will Increase Enforcement for Fall Protection Equipment

Two recent fatalities in this province have initiated the need for the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Branch to become more strategic regarding fall protection legislation. When the construction season officially starts, OHS officers will implement a campaign to focus on reminding employers and workers on the importance of using fall protection equipment. The campaign will consist of enhanced and targeted enforcement activity as well as posters and presentations to industry.

"We are concerned for the safety of all workers in this province and recently we have found that despite our warnings to the construction industry, many workers are just not wearing fall protection equipment," said the Honourable Dianne Whalen, Minister of Government Services. "People must be aware that it does not take a fall from a significant height for it to cause serious injuries or even death. There is nothing more important than protecting yourself and ensuring that you can leave the workplace safe and healthy at the end of the day. Through this campaign, we want employers and workers to take fall protection measures seriously."

OHS officers are finding that the majority of workers are aware of fall protection requirements but are neglecting to use fall protection equipment or install a guardrail system. The OHS Branch will also be increasing their recommendations for prosecutions of repeat offenders.

In August 2006 a worker fell approximately 16 feet to his death while installing roof trusses and in January 2007 a worker fell approximately 14 feet to his death while installing shingles. Neither of these workers was protected from falling by either a guardrail system or a fall arrest system. The latter incident was especially tragic as the company had been issued directives, related to fall protection, less than a week before the fatal accident.

Employers should be aware that under current OHS legislation, they must ensure that fall protection systems are used by workers when working at a height.

"One of the occupational health and safety mandates is to enforce standards and regulations and improve health and safety practices in the workplace. By working together, we can have a better educated workforce which will see such tragedies as a result of the lack of fall protection equipment reduced or eliminated and ensure a safer work environment for everyone," concluded Minister Whalen.

For more information on fall protection please go to www.gov.nl.ca/gs/ohs/safety-info/si-fall-protection.stm. Any questions or concerns can be directed to the Occupational Health and Safety Branch at 709-729-1932 or toll free at 1-800-563-5471.