

**March, 2007**

## **TRAINING UPDATE**

### **WSIB Accreditation for Health & Safety**

The Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) is investigating accreditation of employers for Health and Safety. In Alberta, employers may receive discounts on their WSIB premiums of between 5% and 20%, and in addition accredited firms are given preference for provincial government contracts. Newfoundland, BC and the Yukon give 5% rebates of WSIB premiums to accredited firms. Three other provinces give contract preferences.

To get accreditation, firms will have to demonstrate a number of things, including having health and safety policies in place and having records of health and safety training for their workers. There will be audits, in the case of construction possibly by the CSAO (Construction Safety Association of Ontario).

WSIB information indicates there are approximately 45,000 construction firms in Ontario. The smallest 30,000 pay less than \$5,000 per year in WSIB premiums. This accounts for less than 7% of all premiums paid by construction firms. On the other hand, these firms have 16% of all long-term injuries (LTI's). The 2,186 construction firms that pay \$50,000 or more in premiums per year account for almost 60% of the sector's WSIB premiums and have only 40% of all LTI's.

This could lead to a conclusion that "the big guys are the good guys," which of course is an over-simplification. There are lots of smaller firms with good safety records and good training practices. It is obviously easier, and more worthwhile, for larger firms to employ full-time Health and Safety officers who are responsible for health and safety policies and safety training. This is obviously worthwhile for the 42 contractor firms who pay \$1,000,000 or more per year in WSIB premiums.

At Ambercroft, we work with many of these Health and Safety officers to help make sure workers who are members of Local 506 have the required or recommended training. We have, in fact, our own Health and Safety Policy – for our small operation.

The WSIB initiative could have beneficial effects for safety in construction. However, it won't make our work any easier as employers rush to demand safety training to comply with audit requirements.