

# Fatalities & Serious Injuries STRATEGY

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WorkSafe Saskatchewan, the partnership between the Saskatchewan WCB and the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, has challenged its traditional approach to fatalities and serious injuries. This three-year strategy reflects the complexity of these issues.

**WorkSafe**<sup>TM</sup>  
SASKATCHEWAN

*Work to live.*



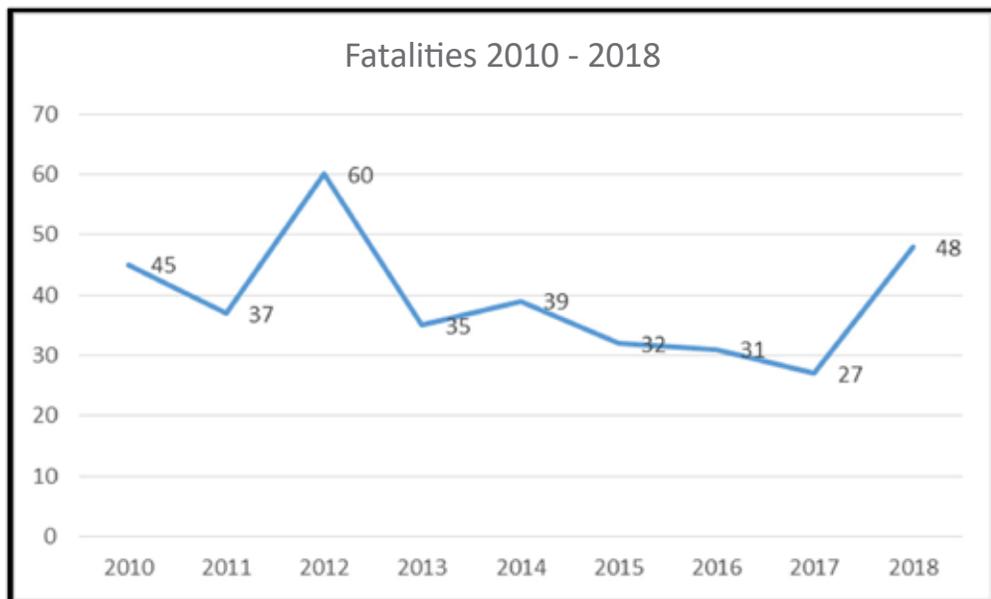
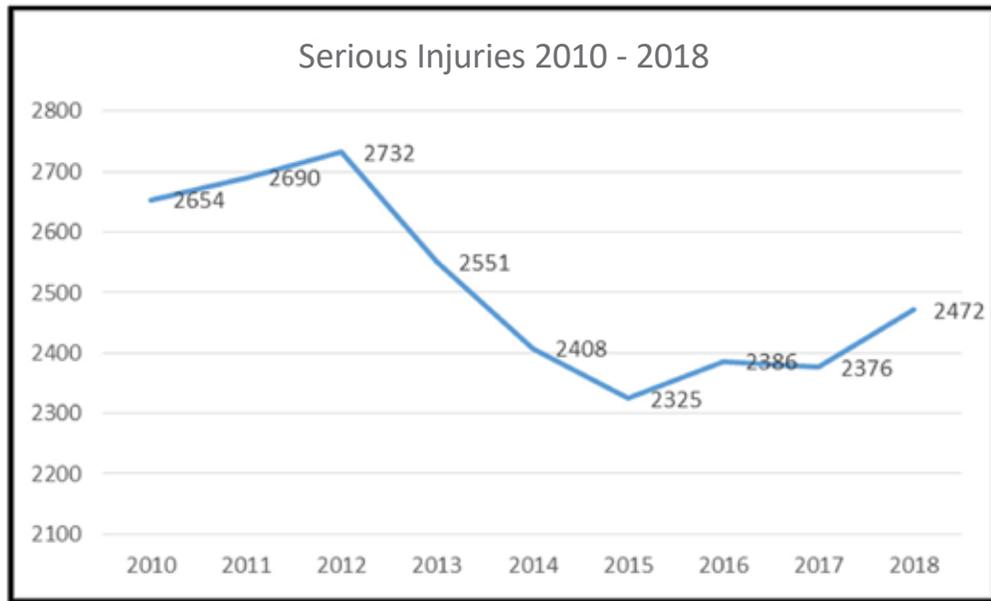
## Executive summary

No employer, worker, coworker or family member ever wants a fatality or serious injury to occur in the workplace, but it's happening. From 2010 to 2018, the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) accepted 354 fatalities for Saskatchewan workers who died while on, or as a result of, their job. Based on a new WCB internal definition of a serious injury, data indicates that from 2010 to 2018, 22,594 workers suffered a serious injury, which often resulted in life-altering implications for the individual and their family. Closer analysis of this data also indicates that although the time loss and total injury rates have seen a slow and steady decline, there are approximately 2,400 serious injuries annually and this key indicator has not been decreasing, but in fact has remained fairly flat. Despite the work already being done in various industries, it is clear there is a need to create more awareness, to gain a better understanding of the root causes of fatalities and serious injuries and to develop an action plan to reduce these preventable injuries and associated suffering.

Preventing workplace fatalities and serious injuries is the indisputable goal of any safety endeavour, but too often the safety management system breaks down; employers and workers come up short in their leadership and joint responsibility roles; well-meaning safety managers approach fatality and serious injury prevention from widely varied perspectives; workers develop feelings of invincibility and the unthinkable occurs: someone dies or is seriously injured on the job.

Despite more than a decade of improvement in the overall provincial total injury rate (TIR), a recent analysis indicates areas of concern. The current trend in work-related fatalities is increasing and the provincial TIR indicator is showing a levelling, or even an increase, in this overall performance metric. Simply put, it is time to review what we've done, where we are and determine a new course to continue the drive to Mission: Zero.





This three-year strategy will reflect the complexity of these issues. It has been developed to prioritize and address the high-risk industries and the tasks within those industries that are resulting in these fatalities and serious injuries. WorkSafe Saskatchewan, the partnership between the Saskatchewan WCB and the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety (LRWS), will challenge its traditional approaches and work quickly toward enhancing existing approaches while developing new methodologies and opportunities.

## Developing the strategy

WorkSafe's approach to its undertakings has always been prefaced on addressing five key areas: targeting, awareness, education, partnerships and enforcement/inspection. This strategy has been developed with the understanding that successful execution will require:



- **Targeting** – The clear understanding of the issues and current state will be undertaken. Detailed analysis of the data and supporting information will be utilized to provide a clear direction and approach for focused activity. The data and analysis will be utilized to develop appropriate leading and lagging indicators for reporting and continuous improvement over the life of the strategy and its deliverables.
- **Awareness** – Messaging for the current state will need to be developed and presented to various stakeholders, supporting organizations and agencies so they can share the findings. This will create a platform to initiate and validate the need for further discussion on the opportunities and approaches to be undertaken.
- **Education** – Where supported by analysis, education and resource opportunities will be aligned, where able, to existing standards and best practices. Where standards and practices do not exist, consideration will be given to supporting the development of those supports.
- **Partnerships** – The utilization and enhancement of existing relationships and the formation of new partnerships will be essential for success. The strategy seeks to identify and collaborate with industry/labour, academic/technical, and subject matter experts to create a broad-based, multi-disciplinary collaborative effort. Communication with a wide range of industry/labour organizations and safety partners and supports will be critical. WorkSafe acknowledges that in creating a living strategy approach to this issue, we will need to meet with stakeholders throughout the life of the strategy to garner further input on priorities and approaches to be actioned out.
- **Enforcement/inspection** – With an enhanced understanding of the current state through analysis of the data and information gathered, the opportunity exists for targeted, value-added enforcement and inspection activities. The perspective of LRWS is an essential component in all aspects of this strategy.



## Going forward

Extensive preliminary analysis, planning and work was initiated in 2018 through the WorkSafe partnership. The fatality and serious injury data has provided an indication or validation of where to start. Specifically, with the issue of work-related fatalities, the data has indicated industries (rate codes), occupations, tasks and causal factors at a high level. This data was utilized to begin to better understand the current state. Work was undertaken to initiate discussions with a number of stakeholders and safety partners throughout 2018 and 2019. Further analysis and information gathering will be ongoing, but the initial analysis has created approaches that were initiated in 2018 and will continue forward within the lifecycle of this strategy. The strategy will focus on responding and, where indicated, be used to refine and revise activities and deliverables going forward.

Analysis was done on the issue of serious injuries. Work undertaken in 2018 has resulted in a new and more comprehensive definition of a “serious injury.”

The new Saskatchewan WCB definition of “serious injury” includes the following criteria:

- A. If a claim is a fatality.
- B. If a claim has more than 50 days of compensation paid.
- C. If a claim has an LRWS<sup>1</sup> referral flag.
- D. If a claim is a primary psychological/mental health claim.
- E. If a claim includes a permanent functional impairment (PFI) greater than or equal to 10 per cent.

\* The new Saskatchewan WCB definition of a serious injury does not change the definition of incidents causing serious bodily injury in Section 8 of The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 1996.

<sup>1</sup>LRWS – Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety.

If one or more of the above criteria is satisfied, a claim will be referred to as a serious injury claim within the scope of this strategy. This new and expanded definition has been laid over traditional data, indicators and validated lines of thought. It also indicated new areas of focus and better indicators for targeting, awareness and education, partnership and enforcement/inspection activities. As with fatalities, the analysis has resulted in work undertaken in 2018 that will be expanded on throughout the life of this strategy.

The WCB’s fatality data led to four focused priorities:

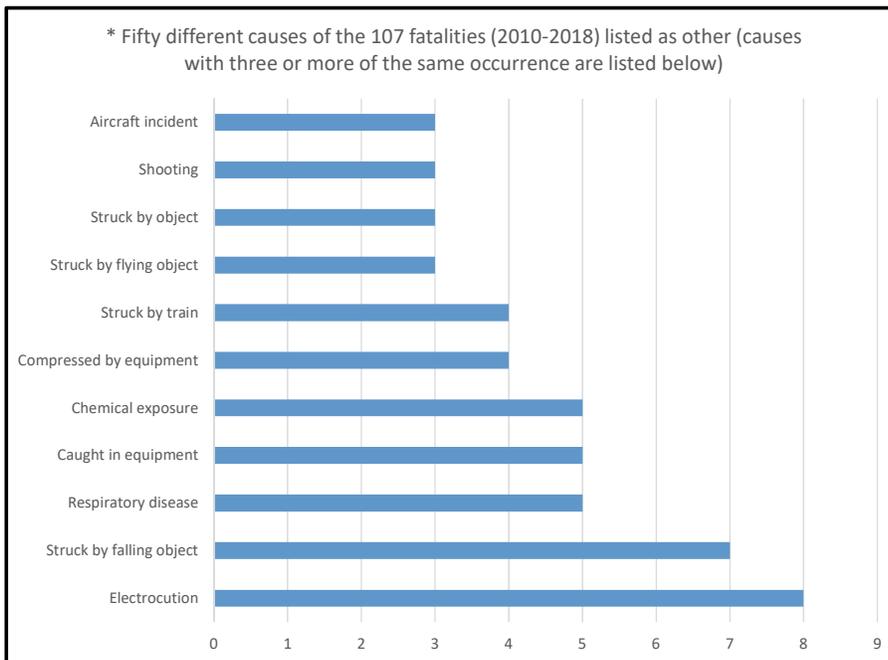
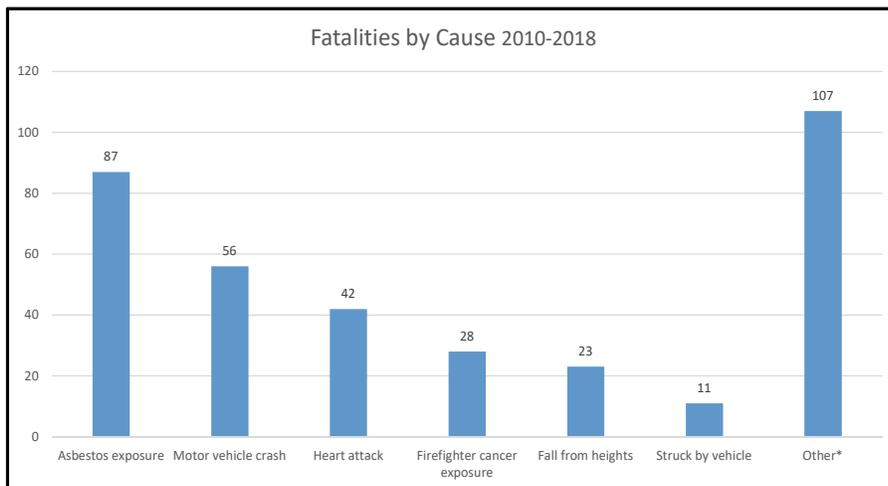
## Fatalities

Motor vehicle crashes are the No.1 cause of acute-related fatalities.

- asbestos exposure
- work-related motor vehicle crashes (MVC)
- firefighter cancer exposure
- falls from heights

From 2010 to 2018, approximately 37 per cent of fatalities were from occupational diseases. Asbestos-related cancers and firefighter cancers were the top two.

A detailed analysis will be required in each area to determine the best direction forward. Broad-based collaboration will be utilized to determine the best approach to achieving the results required. The analysis may indicate the need to strike and support short- and long-term working groups and committees to fully advance the activities determined throughout the life of this strategy.



## Asbestos

Eighty-one per cent of the public were not aware of asbestos risk exposure during home renovation work.

**Objective:** Improve general asbestos hazard awareness from 19 per cent (from 2018 baseline) to 39 per cent in the province of Saskatchewan by Dec. 31, 2021.

**Implementation target:** Improve asbestos awareness and abatement controls.

### Awareness

- Through 2019 and beyond, continue an asbestos awareness campaign.

Sixty-six per cent of occupational disease fatalities between 2010 and 2018 were asbestos-related.

### Education

- Through 2020 and 2021, form an industry best practices group to investigate the development of an industry training standard:
  - Investigate and source a software Learning Management System (LMS) solution to support training standardization in the province of Saskatchewan.
  - Continue LRWS workplace inspection and enforcement activities related to asbestos requirements.
  - Adopt and/or develop and implement the training standard and quality assurance infrastructure.
- In 2021, develop and improve communications regarding asbestos handling and disposal requirements.

### Partnerships

- In 2021, explore partnerships to improve asbestos testing accessibility in the province of Saskatchewan.

## Motor vehicle crashes

**Objective:** Reduce work-related motor vehicle crashes by 30 per cent (from 2018 baseline) in the province of Saskatchewan by Dec. 31, 2021.

**Implementation target:** Integrate Saskatchewan WCB motor vehicle incident data with other data sources to better improve targeting, resource needs and awareness campaigns to reduce work-related motor vehicle crashes.

### Partnerships

- In 2019, integrate Saskatchewan WCB motor vehicle crash data with SGI motor vehicle crash data and develop a risk profile.

### Awareness

- In 2020, collaborate with stakeholders to develop targeted awareness campaigns.
- Through 2020 and 2021, improve social media presence and awareness.

### Education

- In 2020, develop and implement practical resources to reduce the risk of motor vehicle crashes.

### Enforcement/inspection

- Through 2020 and 2021, develop a targeted field campaign with federal Occupational Health and Safety (OHS).



## Firefighter cancer exposures

**Objective:** Improve firefighter cancer prevention controls by 50 per cent (from 2019 baseline) in the province of Saskatchewan by Dec. 31, 2021.

**Implementation target:** Complete firefighter cancer audits, confirm broader audit results, improve the baseline audit scores and improve awareness to reduce the risk of future firefighter cancer exposures.

### Partnerships

- In 2019, audit a sample of Saskatchewan fire halls (including urban, rural, wildfire and volunteer) to provide a baseline audit report for each hall and provide a presentation of the findings and recommendations on the notable trends at the fire chiefs' and volunteer firefighters' convention.

### Awareness/education

- Through 2020 and 2021, develop an awareness campaign to improve the awareness of system, program or training gaps, survey fire halls to gather feedback on the current state and develop and provide access to resources to help reduce the gaps.

### Partnerships

- In 2021, investigate the feasibility of a grant program to provide assistance for improving and purchasing additional hazard controls, such as particulate blocking hoods or back up sets of turnout gear.

## Falls from heights

**Objective:** Reduce falls from heights injuries by 30 per cent (from 2018 baseline) in the province of Saskatchewan by Dec. 31, 2021.

**Implementation target:** Collaborate with stakeholders to better understand fall protection challenges, improve fall protection awareness and develop and implement standardized working-at-heights training.

### Partnerships

- In 2019, develop and host an industry focus group to better understand the barriers and challenges to wearing fall protection at work.

### Awareness

- In 2019 and 2020, collaborate with stakeholders to develop and implement a communications campaign/strategy to address gaps.

### Enforcement/inspection

- Continue LRWS workplace inspections and enforcement activities related to working-from-heights requirements.

Twenty-three per cent of occupational disease fatalities between 2010 and 2018 were firefighter cancers.



Falling was the fifth leading cause of workplace fatalities in 2018.

## Education

- Through 2020 and 2021, investigate and source a software LMS solution to support training standardization in the province of Saskatchewan.
- Through 2020 and 2021, form an industry best practices group and develop or adopt an appropriate fall protection training standard.
- In 2021, implement a supporting quality assurance standard.

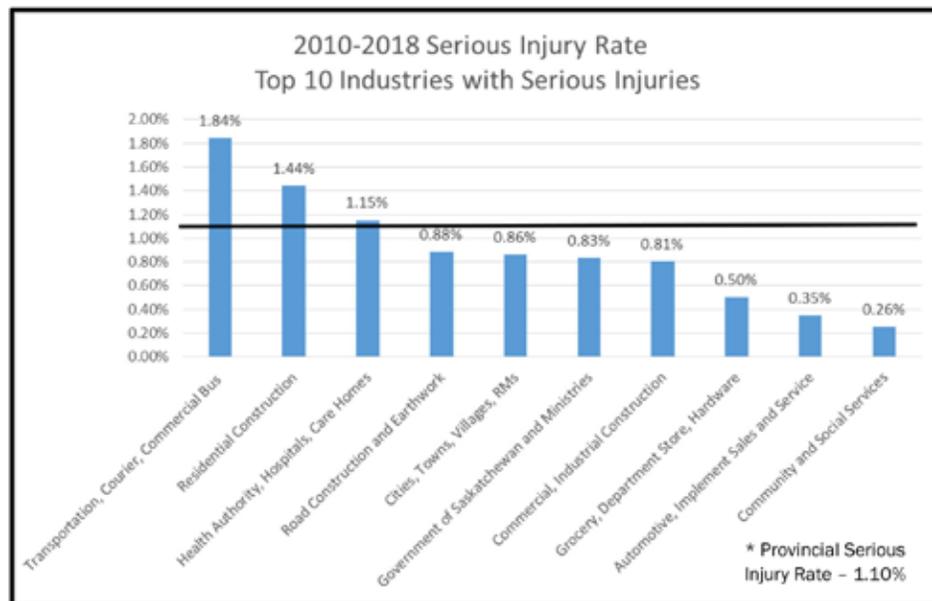
## Serious injuries

From 2010 to 2018, health care and transportation were the top two industries with serious injuries and accounted for 28 per cent of all serious injuries in the province.

As stated previously, approximately 2,400 Saskatchewan workers are seriously injured each year and this key indicator has remained fairly consistent.

Like the proposed direction for fatalities, the analysis may indicate the need to develop short- and long-term working groups and committees to fully advance the activities determined throughout the life of this strategy. WorkSafe is uniquely positioned to develop, facilitate or support these efforts where indicated.

Hands are the most injured body part, accounting for approximately 20 per cent of all claims accepted.



The WCB's serious injury data led to the following focused priorities:

- health care
- transportation (including federally regulated)
- first responders
- construction (see falls from heights and asbestos exposure in the fatalities section)
- manufacturing

Back, leg, shoulder and arm injuries represent more than 60 per cent of all serious injuries.

From 2010 to 2018, health care had the highest number of serious injuries, accounting for more than 20 per cent of all serious injuries in this same period.

## Health care

**Objective:** Reduce serious injuries in the Saskatchewan health care sector by 10 per cent (from 2018 baseline) by Dec. 31, 2021.

**Implementation target:** Develop a collaborative approach to identify the root cause of serious injuries to reduce the risk of injuries in health care facilities.

### Awareness

- In 2019, complete analysis on all serious injuries in health care to identify at-risk work tasks.

### Education

- Through 2019 and 2020, develop a collaborative approach to uncover the root causes of serious injuries and leverage continuous process improvement methodologies to improve hazard controls.
- Through 2019 and 2020, test the feasibility of applied root cause investigation in health care to determine a broader provincial health care approach.
- Through 2020 and 2021, replicate solutions validated in targeted health care facilities.

### Partnerships

- Through 2020 and 2021, identify partnerships to build capacity to provide expertise on specific technical hazard controls.

### Enforcement/inspection

- Continue LRWS workplace inspections and enforcement activities in the health care sector.

## Transportation

**Objective:** Reduce serious injuries by 10 per cent (from 2018 baseline) in the province of Saskatchewan transportation sector by Dec. 31, 2021.

**Implementation target:** Improve hazard controls for at-risk job tasks, incorporate safe work procedures into truck driver training programs and create sustainability through safety management systems for the transportation industry.

### Awareness/education

- In 2019, identify at-risk job tasks, complete hazard assessment, integrate hazard controls into truck driver training programs and develop and launch a social media campaign.

### Enforcement/inspection

- Through 2019 and 2020, develop and implement an inspection/enforcement targeted field campaign carried out by federal OHS.

From 2010 to 2018, the T42 rate code (transportation, courier, commercial bus) had the second highest number of serious injuries, accounting for 7.75 per cent of all serious injuries in this same period.

## Partnerships

- Through 2020 and 2021, assist the transportation industry in the development of a safety management and audit protocol and supporting training program to implement a Certificate of Recognition (COR™) program for the transportation industry.
- In 2021, assist the transportation industry by auditing the safety management systems at five transportation companies.

## First responders

**Objective:** Reduce the duration of psychological injury claims by 20 per cent (from 2018 baseline) in the province of Saskatchewan by Dec. 31, 2021.

\* This objective was based on the following assumptions: Improvements in awareness and self-care resources for public safety personnel (PSP), along with the promotion of evidence-based practices, building capacity for PSP-informed health care practitioners and improvements in WCB psychological injury claim processes. It is assumed that the above factors will have a positive effect on the prevalence and duration of psychological injuries.

**Implementation target:** Improve access to first responder mental health resources/support services, increase awareness of available proactive mental health resources and involve customers in the review of the WCB psychological injury claims process to identify process improvements and develop and implement return-to-work resources for psychological claims.

## Partnerships

- A provincial first responders' mental health committee was developed in 2018.

## Awareness/education

- Through 2019 and 2021, develop and launch the first responders' mental health website to improve access to mental health resources. The committee has committed to achieving the following multi-year goals:
  - Research, share and promote relevant research and best practices to support positive mental health among first responders.
  - Develop a network of culturally knowledgeable, competent, credentialed practitioners.
  - Develop and pilot an anti-stigma campaign incorporating champions from various first responder groups.
  - Develop a toolkit of best practices and resources for employers, supervisors and workers to support mental health in the workplace.
  - Identify an evaluation approach for programs and resources made available through this strategy.
  - Increase outreach to first responders, their leadership and their communities to promote awareness of resources and create meaningful change within first responder organizations.



Exposure to traumatic/stressful events is a common cause of serious injury among first responders in cities, towns, villages, rural municipalities (G31 rate code) and government ministries (G51 rate code). These two rate codes were in the top six rate codes for serious injuries from 2010 to 2018.

- Host a first responder mental health learning event.
- Reach out to the broader group of public safety personnel to support them in addressing their mental health needs.
- Support mental health practitioners to improve the effectiveness of the assessment and treatment of first responders.

### Partnerships

- In 2021, improve access to peer support for career and volunteer first responders.

## Manufacturing

Hands are the most injured body part in Saskatchewan workplaces, accounting for approximately 20 per cent of all claims accepted.

**Objective:** Reduce serious injuries by five per cent (from 2018 baseline) in the Saskatchewan manufacturing sector by Dec. 31, 2021.

**Implementation target:** Improve guarding and personal protective equipment hazard controls in the manufacturing sector.

### Targeting

- In 2019, identify five manufacturing facilities with the highest number of serious hand injuries.

### Partnerships

- Through 2019 and 2020, WorkSafe co-brand the Ansel Guardian program (this is a personal protective equipment audit).
- Through 2020 and 2021, complete Guardian assessments at each targeted facility, evaluate effectiveness and build capacity to continue assessments throughout the province.

### Education

- In 2020, adopt or develop provincial machine guarding audit protocol in partnership with the Saskatchewan Association for Safety in Manufacturing (SASM).
- In 2021, complete machine guarding audits.

### Enforcement/inspection

- Continue LRWS workplace inspection and enforcement activities in the manufacturing sector.

### Awareness

- In collaboration with stakeholders, develop a supporting communications plan.
- Measure effectiveness, refine and revise.

Hand injuries within the manufacturing industry account for more than 700 injuries annually.

Prioritized areas of injury were also considered in the development of this strategy. For serious injuries accepted from 2010 to 2018, the manufacturing sector had the highest costs for hand injuries and is a close second to the building construction sector when it comes to claim counts and compensation days. It is expected that shoulders/back, arms and legs will be prioritized areas of injury within other objectives within this strategy (i.e. health care and transportation sectors).

Prioritized areas of injury:

- hand
- shoulder/back
- arm
- leg

## Continuous improvement

### Targeting

- There is an opportunity to enhance the reporting requirements for WorkSafe priority employers:
  - In 2020, add serious injuries and fatalities to WorkSafe Priority Employer Program selection criteria.
  - In 2020, review and respond to occupational health committee (OHC) minute completeness, including legal requirements and follow through actions, as part of the WorkSafe Priority Employer Program.
  - Through 2020 and 2021, improve the involvement of worker and employer co-chairs within the various phases of the WorkSafe Priority Employer Program.

### Awareness

- Improve vulnerable workers' health and safety awareness:
  - WorkSafe acknowledges the need to improve awareness and understanding of basic health and safety roles, rights and responsibilities for vulnerable workers. Whether as a result of age, or English as a second language, work will be undertaken to improve the current state of safety literacy for this group. This will require further consultation with stakeholders, up to and including the creation of an advisory group to lend directional support.
- Serious injuries and fatalities:
  - In 2020, add hospitalization criteria to the WCB internal serious injury definition.
  - In 2020, LRWS will continue to investigate publicly reporting fatality investigation reports in an effort to improve public awareness and prevention efforts.



- o Through 2020 and 2021 and beyond, develop a collaborative prevention service model to assist employers to identify the root causes of serious injuries and mitigate the risk of reoccurrence.
- o In 2021, develop and implement a predictive serious injury and fatality model to proactively code claims that have the potential for fatalities and serious injuries.

### Education

- Provide broader education on health and safety rights:
  - o WorkSafe educates and advocates on the three fundamental rights of all workers. There is an opportunity to expand on this work, including the development of materials in other languages to better accommodate workers with English as a second language.
  - o In 2020, WorkSafe will launch a broad-based public awareness campaign on the three fundamental rights as provided by Saskatchewan legislation.
- Improve psychological health and safety (PHS):
  - o In 2020, establish a provincial psychological safety resource/partnership and update existing provincial PHS strategy.
  - o Through 2020 and 2021, develop/implement industry safety groups for at-risk employers/industries (Workshop the development of PHS systems).
  - o Through 2020 and 2021, develop WorkSafe PHS resources to improve the implementation of psychologically safe workplaces.
  - o Through 2020 and 2021, create a specialized WCB unit to improve the WCB's ability to facilitate the restoration of abilities for psychological injuries.



### Partnerships

- Gather ongoing stakeholder input on serious injuries and fatalities:
  - o There is an existing multi-stakeholder committee in Saskatchewan that can be utilized to continually review and provide input on serious injuries and fatalities. The Occupational Health and Safety Council exists to provide a forum for the review and input of safety matters in the province. Consideration should be given to adding serious injury and fatality strategy information and reporting to the committee for review and input as a standing agenda item of its meetings.

### Enforcement/inspection

- Continuously improve the enforcement/inspection approach:
  - o Through 2020 and 2021, develop a directed inspection/enforcement campaign based on the serious injury model.
  - o Through 2020 and 2021, improve the involvement of worker and employer co-chairs during directed inspection/enforcement campaigns.



## Reporting progress

This will ensure stakeholders are kept informed of the strategy's progress and its results. It will support the continuous improvement mindset by allowing the strategy to flex and change based on the progress and results achieved. Appropriate metrics, both leading and lagging, will be developed and serve as the dashboard for all internal and external reporting.

## Closing

WorkSafe, since its inception, has been working in these areas and, along with the effort and energy of many people and organizations, has contributed to the improvements seen over the years. This strategy will seek to take those established undertakings and expand their scope, effectiveness and corresponding results. We will utilize a continuous improvement methodology in our work to ensure the strategy and any operational aspects respond quickly to the ongoing analysis. As mentioned, it is understood WorkSafe will not be able to achieve the results desired on its own. This strategy recognizes the need for WorkSafe to collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders at all levels and, where required, look to create and increase capacity and sustainability.

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