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News Item

The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission responds to recommendations from the Office of the Chief Coroner of the Northwest Territories

Yellowknife, NT (July 31, 2018) – The WSCC has responded to the recommendations made by the Office of the Chief Coroner of the Northwest Territories following the coroner's investigation into the death of David John Vinnicombe, a worker who was fatally injured at a worksite near Inuvik, Northwest Territories on June 28, 2016.

All recommendations have been reviewed and a summary of the responses are as follows:

In coordination with safety partners, to develop a public education campaign to promote the Powered Mobile Equipment Code of Practice, with emphasis on ensuring proactive safety cultures in the workplace and explaining how employers can implement programs to assess and properly document worker qualifications and competencies.

The WSCC Powered Mobile Equipment (PME) Code of Practice was a primary focus of worksite inspections during the 2017 and 2018 construction season. The PME Code of Practice is available for download on the WSCC website, can be accessed offline on handheld devices through the OHS App, and has been publicized in the WSCC's monthly newsletter *SafetyNet*.

In coordination with safety partners, encourage Employers to engage in independent third-party audits of their safety programs.

The WSCC encourages all employers to regularly review their Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) programs and to participate in independent audits to measure their safety progress. For employers who do not have a recognized third-party audit, Safety Officers can conduct reviews of the employers' OHS programs and make recommendations for improvements. Additionally, a mandatory employer safety incentive program, Safe Advantage, measures the effectiveness of larger employers. This program rewards employers with proven health and safety, return to work/claims management practices, and low claims experience costs. Those employers who fall short of standards pay penalties.

To commission a study to review the efficacy of the use of both safety equipment and communication devices designed to lessen the chance of injury or death and increase the survivability of the operators of heavy equipment in the event of a collision or roll-over. Ideally this would include (but not be limited to) a feasibility study of built-in inclinometer gauges with audible and visual alerts, and two-way radios.

The WSCC carried out research on the legislation and safe work practices in place across Canada and determined that there are currently no jurisdictions in Canada where inclinometers gauges are required or considered standard safe work practice.

The WSCC concluded that any further study would not result in information on whether the use of additional safety equipment would result in a decrease in incidents or a lessening of the severity of incidents.

The current legislative requirements in the Northwest Territories are consistent with standard practice across Canada, which requires Roll-Over Protective Structures and the use of seat belts or other restraints. The WSCC does not have the authority to direct the use of safety equipment other than equipment listed in legislation and does not intend to recommend revision to the legislation to add additional equipment requirements at this time.

The WSCC will continue to focus efforts on improving safety education and training for employers and workers, on reinforcing awareness of incidents and safety, and on strengthening enforcement of current safe work procedures to proactively prevent injuries or fatalities.

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WSCC is an arm's length government agency responsible for administering the Workers' Compensation Acts, Safety Acts, Explosives Use Acts, the Mine Health and Safety Acts, and associated Regulations.

Together, with our partners, the WSCC provides services to almost 40,000 workers and 4,000 employers across the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. We process over 3,000 claims and conduct over 1,000 inspections annually to ensure the safety of Northern workplaces. The WSCC is unique in Canada as it is the only workers' compensation organization in the country to insure workers across more than one province or territory. We proudly offer services in the official languages of both territories.