

“Global Scans” are a free service brought to you by [Global Training Edge](http://www.globaltrainingedge.com/). Each Scan highlights major or interesting news in occupational health and safety, with a concentration on Canada.

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Nova Scotia to Re-Evaluate Chronic Pain Claims

The Workers Compensation Board of Nova Scotia will re-evaluate about 1,400 chronic-pain claims as a result of a court decision. On December 7, 2007, the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal decided that injured workers who developed chronic pain before April 17, 1985 (this group of workers is sometimes called “pre-Charter” injured workers) are eligible to be assessed for chronic pain benefits.

The issue arose from a wording difference between the NS Chronic Pain Regulations and WCB policy. The policy stated that a worker may be eligible to receive benefits if they “developed” chronic pain on or after April 17, 1985. The regulations state a worker may be eligible to receive benefits if they “had” chronic pain on or after April 17, 1985. The language in the Regulations potentially entitled workers who were injured and developed chronic pain prior to April 17, 1985 to benefits.

The WCB expects to complete the reviews of all claims on the chronic pain list by June 2008.

The WCB estimates the cost to provide benefits to the pre-Charter group at approximately \$12 million, 62% or \$7.4 million of which relates to insured claims. The remaining costs would be covered by self-insurers who pay the cost of claims directly (Canada Post, federal and provincial governments, etc.).

See the [court decision](#).

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Nova Scotia Targets Mental Health as Workplace Issue

“Mental illness has become the number one workplace issue facing employers in Canada” is the message from the Nova Scotia Minister of Health. According to Statistics Canada, about nine per cent of Nova Scotians report being depressed and fewer than 40 per cent do something about it. To address the issue, the Department launched a new Internet site as part of its mental health strategy. The site includes an employer toolkit, fact sheets, calendars and posters.

See [details](#).

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New Brunswick Doubles Fines in Construction Zones

Changes to the New Brunswick Motor Vehicle Act are now in effect. The changes include section 142.01 which doubles the fines for speeding in a highway construction zone.

See a copy of the [Motor Vehicle Act](#).

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PEI Revises Noise Regulations

The Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) of Prince Edward Island is revising its noise in the workplace regulation to bring the province in line with other jurisdictions in Atlantic Canada. Effective October 31, 2008, the amendments will require employers whose workers may be exposed to occupational noise to:

- perform annual audiometric tests for employees;
- hold educational sessions for workers;
- implement engineered noise control options;
- post signs warning of hazardous noise areas; and,
- incorporate a hearing protection program into the workplace's overall health and safety program.

Employers must still ensure that a worker's noise exposure does not exceed 85 dBA over an eight-hour period with a 3-dBA doubling.

See [details](#).

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Residential Roofers Must Now Follow Code in Alberta

All employers in Alberta's roofing industry must now comply with fall protection requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Code following the expiration of a residential roofing section of the code. The provisions, which came into effect on October 31, 2007, require all roofing employers to ensure that workers use a fall protection system if a worker could fall three metres or more or if there is “an unusual possibility of injury” if a worker were to fall less than three metres. Previously, another part of the code had exempted residential roofers working on a

4:12 or less roof from an explicit requirement for fall protection.

See [details](#).

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Alberta Investigates Second Fire Resulting in Thousands Being Evacuated

The Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (EUB) is investigating a gas release and fire that occurred on November 19, 2007 in a portion of the Shell Canada Scotford Upgrader plant near Fort Saskatchewan this afternoon. A gas release and a resulting fire occurred within the Upgrader's Residue Hydroconversion Unit. The fire was suppressed by on-site personnel, but not before roughly 3000 workers were evacuated. No members of the public or Shell employees were injured as a result of this incident.

This follows an October 2, 2007 fire at the Suncor oil sands facility near Fort McMurray in which over 1000 workers were evacuated.

See [details](#) on the Shell Canada fire.

See the October Global Scan or [details](#) on the Suncor fire.

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Canadian Academy Recommends N95 Respirators for Seasonal and Pandemic Influenza

The Council of Canadian Academies today released a study entitled "Influenza Transmission and the Role of Personal Protective Respiratory Equipment: An Assessment of the Evidence." The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) asked the Council to investigate how seasonal and pandemic influenza are transmitted and, based on those findings, to assess the contribution of respirators and surgical masks to the prevention of transmission.

The study concludes that:

1. N95 respirators protect against the inhalation of nasopharyngeal, tracheobronchial and alveolar-sized particles.
2. Surgical masks offer no significant protection against the inhalation of alveolar and tracheobronchial-sized particles.
3. Surgical masks worn by an infected person may play a role in the prevention of influenza transmission by reducing the amount of infectious material that is expelled into the environment.

The report of the study represents the consensus findings of a 13-member panel of experts.

See [details](#).

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Study Finds Canada's Road Safety Record Disappointing

In their Road Safety Vision 2010 Mid-Term Review, the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators finds that progress towards the national road fatality and serious injury targets "disappointing". While some sub-target levels have fallen, serious injury rates have fallen at less than the desired rate, while fatality rates have returned to levels last seen in 2002. Ontario and the Northwest Territories had the lowest fatality rates, while Nova Scotia, Northwest Territories, the Yukon and Prince Edward Island showed the greatest improvements. The provinces where

fatality rates increased the most were Alberta, British Columbia and New Brunswick.

See [details](#).

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Study Finds High Absenteeism Amongst Health Care Workers

The Canadian Institute for Health Information has found that higher than average absenteeism amongst health care workers. In the report "Canada's Health Care Providers, 2007", in 2006 the average Canadian health care worker aged 25 to 54 missed almost 12 days of work due to his or her own illness or disability.⁷ This compares to an average of seven days of work missed for all employed Canadians and continues a 20-year trend of higher absenteeism amongst health care workers. Absenteeism varied greatly between provinces absenteeism rates, with New Brunswick having the highest number (16.1) of lost days for health workers, and Alberta had the lowest (7.2).

See [details](#).

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OSHA Announces Employer-Paid Personal Protective Equipment Final Rule

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced a final rule on employer-paid personal protective equipment (PPE). Under the rule, all PPE, with a few exceptions, will be provided at no cost to the employee. OSHA anticipates that this rule will have substantial safety benefits that will result in more than 21,000 fewer occupational injuries per year. The rule was published in the Federal Register on November 15, 2007.

The final rule contains a few exceptions for ordinary safety-toed footwear, ordinary prescription safety eyewear, logging boots, and ordinary clothing and weather-related gear. The final rule also clarifies that employers do not need to pay for employee-owned PPE and employers must pay for replacement PPE.

The rule provides an enforcement deadline of May 15, 2008 to allow employers time to change their existing PPE payment policies to accommodate the final rule.

See [details](#).

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OSHA Commends the Ohio School Facilities Commission

OSHA has commended the Ohio School Facilities Commission for taking the lead in approving contracts on school construction projects from those bidders who have successfully completed the OSHA 10- or 30-hour Construction Course. Companies must certify that all project supervisors, foremen and employees working on the jobsite have fulfilled the requirements of the course. The criteria extend not only to employees of the bidding company, but also to employees of its subcontractors and any other contractor working on the project.

It is noteworthy that a similar program has been in place in Nova Scotia for provincial government construction projects for several years.

See [details](#).

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Offshore Industry Has More to Do Says HSE

A three year investigation and the inspection of nearly 100 offshore installations has resulted in the offshore industry receiving a stark warning from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The sector was told that while significant improvements had been made “more must be done!” The findings from the Key Programme 3 (KP3) Installation Integrity report convinced HSE to continue to make asset integrity one of the main priorities for Offshore Division in 2008 and for the foreseeable future.

The KP3 investigation involved targeted inspections of nearly 100 offshore installations of all types, including fixed, manned and normally unattended installations, floating production, floating production storage and offloading vessels and mobile drilling rigs.

See [details](#).

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Standard Lays Out Criteria for Safety Symbols

The National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) has published a standard that provides general principles for the design, evaluation and use of safety symbols to identify and warn against specific hazards and personal injury. The standard, ANSI Z535.3-2007 American National Standard Criteria for Safety Symbols, includes a procedure for evaluating image effectiveness in communicating intended messages, as well as considerations for graphic design of safety symbols.

The publication aims to address the fact that the U.S. population is multi-ethnic, highly mobile, and derived from a multiplicity of social and educational backgrounds. Word-only signs might not be effective in promoting safety to the general population. Signs with safety symbols can promote greater and more rapid communication of the safety message and greater safety. ANSI Z535.3-2007 incorporates several significant changes. The safety alert symbol has been harmonized with color alternatives specified by the International Organization for Standardization. Annex A now includes illustrations of the standard’s principles and guidelines, while Annex C features safety symbol examples.

See [details](#).

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New Biological Threats in European Working Environment

In the Expert Forecast on Emerging Biological Risks Related to Occupational Safety and Health, the [European Risk Observatory](#) has identified emerging biological risks that are most likely to affect workers in the European Union. Farmers, healthcare workers or people in evolving industries such as waste treatment are particularly affected. Communicable diseases such as SARS, avian flu or Dengue are of increasing concern. Despite existing European law, knowledge is still limited and in many workplaces biological risks are poorly assessed and prevented. It is estimated that 5000 EU workers die every year of communicable diseases caused by viral,

bacterial, insect or animal related biological hazards.

The identified risks are:

1. Global epidemics are the biggest emerging issue
2. Emergence of drug-resistant organisms
3. Poor risk assessment
4. Lack of information on biological risks in the workplace and inadequate provision of OSH training to workers
5. Poor maintenance of water and air systems
6. Combined exposure to biological agents and chemicals
7. Endotoxins
8. Indoor moulds
9. Waste treatment.

In an earlier report called the Expert Forecast on Emerging Physical Risks Related to Occupational Safety and Health, the European Risk Observatory identified the risks as:

1. Lack of physical activity
2. Combined exposure to musculoskeletal disorder risk factors and psychosocial risk factors
3. Complexity of technologies and work processes with complex human–system interfaces
4. Insufficient protection of high-risk groups against long-standing ergonomic risks
5. Thermal risks
6. Ultraviolet radiation
7. Multi-factorial risks
8. Vibration.

In an earlier report called the Expert Forecast on Emerging Psychosocial Risks Related to Occupational Safety and Health, the Observatory identified the psychosocial risks as:

1. New forms of employment contracts and job insecurity
2. The ageing workforce
3. Work intensification
4. High emotional demands at work
5. Violence and bullying in workplaces
6. Poor work–life balance

See:

- [Expert Forecast on Emerging Biological Risks Related to Occupational Safety and Health](#)
- [Expert Forecast on Emerging Physical Risks Related to Occupational Safety and Health](#)
- [Expert Forecast on Emerging Psychosocial Risks Related to Occupational Safety and Health](#).

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