



Charting New Directions in Health & Safety Excellence

COMPASS NEWSLETTER December 2008

Hi everyone. It's been a few months since our last newsletter and we thought we would get another one out before Christmas. If this is the first newsletter you have received from us you are probably wondering how in the world you got onto our mailing list. We'll, if we have had contact with you on a professional level, perhaps as a client or you expressed interest in our services, or attended one of our courses, you were put onto our newsletter mailing list. If you don't want us to keep you on the list, simply let us know and we'll take you off.

SAFETY SURVEY STANDARD (Alberta)

In our last newsletter we updated you on the Alberta Government, Employment and Immigration (EI) Partnerships safety survey standard. This new survey option in the Partnerships program was quietly implemented in December of 2007. You'd think a program of such significance would garner some press but it didn't. Since our last update, we had a chance to meet with department representatives to express some of our concerns on the new standard. Our view is that the survey standard participation requirements are bias against the very companies (i.e. medium and large) that may qualify and want to conduct a survey instead of an audit. Here are some of the concerns we expressed;

- The new survey standard requires a minimum sample size of 40% regardless of the size of the company. Sample sizes for PIR audits decrease significantly with larger employee populations. A company auditing with 1000 employees needs to interview approximately 90 employees. The same company surveying would be required to sample a minimum of 400 employees. One has to question the significant differences in sampling requirements between the two methods of measurement. Which requirement is statistically correct? Could there be any scientific basis for this variance between the two?
- Here's another interesting participation requirement. Surveying companies cannot opt for the survey option unless they have held a Certificate of Recognition (COR) for four or more years (i.e. achieved a Certificate of Recognition (COR), then conducted two years of maintenance audits and then completed a COR renewal audit). Our view is that this is like saying a company should try to implement the

basic safety hardware. Then you can survey to see if the company culture will sustain the efforts. This requirement defies the research on safety perception surveys. Research tells us that surveys are a much better predictor of safety performance than audits. Here they are being treated a bit like the measurement choice of the last resort. The fact is, that companies should assess their culture before they do anything else.

- Another. If the company doesn't achieve a 90% or better in the renewal audit, it cannot qualify to survey. Where did the 90% come from? What hat was this number pulled out of? In other words, your company has to achieve 10% above the 80% pass mark that has been a PIR standard for many years.
- Also, Certifying Partners (CPs) can opt out of offering companies the safety survey option. Guess what, they have indeed opted to not offer the survey option. Why the option to participate or not participate? Either surveying is a legitimate measurement option or it isn't. Partners don't have the option to offer audits or not offer them.
- Here is our greatest concern. When the PIR program was first introduced a number of years ago, there was very little oversight on CPs guidelines on training, auditor qualifications and certification, peer or no peer options, quality assurance processes and more. What happened? Certifying Partners developed auditing standards and guidelines that were all over the map. A safety management system is a safety management system. The safety basics are the same for an oil company as it is for a construction company. Doesn't all of this suggest standardization and consistency should be fundamental?

Over the last few years, EI has been requested to standardize various aspects of the PIR program and ensure there is more consistency between how CPs manage the program. This is extremely difficult to do now as the CPs programs are entrenched. You can't now tell Enform to lower or raise its' auditor certification or training standards to meet another CP's or vice versa. That's where the survey option is heading- if it even really gets off the ground. It's important to map out the survey program basic requirements now before each of the CPs sort it out for themselves.

Back to our communications with EI. The answer is: no changes to this standard for this year. I'm told the department would like to see how the standard works first and then tweak it in the future. I guess it will work out just fine – nobody is participating in the option as it really isn't supported. On the other hand, many PIR participating companies currently conduct surveys outside the PIR program. They continue to participate in the PIR audit process more as good corporate citizens than as a beneficiary of the measurement approach.

One final comment. Some people mistakenly believe that because we support surveys we are opposed to auditing. We want to be clear on this point; audits are a useful measurement tool that can provide valuable information on the state of the basic safety elements. However, we also believe there are other better instruments available that can, at the very least, compliment the audit process and provide valuable information on the corporate culture.



BASIC FIRE SAFETY TRAINING

Once again we would like to highlight our offering of basic fire safety training. The instructor is Tyler Ryan, a City of Edmonton fire fighter. The course focuses around fire extinguisher use and general fire safety. There's no simulations in this course, you feel the heat of a real fire and learn how to put one out. This course is delivered on your site. Basic fire theory is conducted in the classroom and the practical, for obvious reasons, is conducted outdoors. Each

participant gets to experience what it's like to extinguish a pan fire. It's surprising how big of a fire you can put out with a small extinguisher when you know how to do it properly. The time to learn to use an extinguisher is before the fire emergency occurs. **Call us** for more details. If you are interested let us know and we will assess your location and obtain the necessary fire approvals from the Fire Department.

IS YOUR COMPANY SUFFERING FROM AUDIT FATIGUE

We have written another article on some of the problems associated with how many companies currently measure safety performance. I've included a copy of the article **here**. You will also find this article in the next issue of the CSSE Contact newsletter. A copy has also been sent to the Alberta, Employment and Immigration Minister, Honourable Hector Goudreau. It is our hope that he will come to realize that more of the same in the PIR program will not yield the improved safety results he hopes to attain during his term.

COS BOOK REVIEW

We were very pleased with the book review that Canadian Occupational Safety Magazine did on our book. Click **here** if you are interested in having a look at it.

WEB-BASE SURVEY APPLICATION

We built a web based survey application to help safety associations conduct surveys for or with their clients. Consultants who want to conduct surveys for clients are also welcome to use it. If you are representing an association or, if you are a consultant and expect to have a number of clients, we can partition off a part of our application for your use. You will have the ability to create and administer surveys that meet your specific customers' surveys needs. Click **here** to view.

To the extent necessary or requested, we can provide our survey expertise. After reading our how to book, however, it is unlikely you will need much of our help.

JANIE RYAN - OHS CERTIFICATE HOLDER

Most of the recipients of this little newsletter know us personally. If you do, you know that Janie has been working with Compass know for about six years. Over the last couple of years she has been working on her University of Alberta OH&S Certificate. I'm pleased to announce she has graduated. Janie will write her CRSP exam in the spring of 2009.

Have a very Merry Christmas and good tidings for the New Year