



PCU-WHS and AgSafe collaborate on academic approach to reducing injury duration on BC farms and ranches



L to R: Wolfgang Zimmermann, Wendy Bennett, Ralph McGinn

British Columbia's agricultural sector is taking two steps forward in a campaign to reduce the number of work days lost due to injury on BC's farms and ranches.

PCU-WHS has signed an agreement with agricultural health and safety association, AgSafe, to provide educational modules to its field staff, including safety advisors in the Lower Mainland and regional safety consultants around the province, as well as employees of AgSafe member organizations, who will be able to take continuing education modules as part of the University's Disability Management Practitioner Program at a discounted offering.

University President, Wolfgang Zimmermann, applauds the association's forward-thinking move. "It's a terrific leadership opportunity that AgSafe has shown, recognizing that, as of the end of last year, almost 1.2 million people with disabilities across Canada fell below the poverty line. The majority become impaired during their working lives, and without a return to work program, where are they going to go?"

In conjunction, AgSafe Chair Ralph McGinn stresses the importance of tackling the high rate of injury duration in BC's agricultural sector. "In the last 20 years, the injury rate has come down from near 7 to just above 2, but duration has spiked. We have put more emphasis on having employers understand that they can reduce their costs by bringing injured workers back through modified job duties."

McGinn adds that taking the preliminary PCU-WHS modules will allow AgSafe staff to better explain the benefits of disability management, particularly to smaller employers. "Bigger employers who are aware of the obligation to accommodate workers with injury are doing it. We're pushing the idea that employers of all sizes can rely on reintegration and accommodation with quicker interventions to bring workers back to reduce costs."



NIDMAR Self Assessment Tool Available to AgSafe Members

In addition to its agreement with PCU-WHS, AgSafe has signed a MOU with the National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR), founder and supporter of PCU-WHS, to equip BC's farms and ranches with a tool to assess their own disability management programs and activities. The Disability Management Self Assessment tool (DMSA), was developed under the auspices of the International Disability Management Standards Council (IDMSC), with input from international leaders in all relevant stakeholder groups.

The DMSA is designed to allow individual organizations to undertake a basic self assessment of their existing return to work and disability management efforts and obtain a report that provides an overview of their current performance

AgSafe Executive Director, Wendy Bennett, is enthusiastic about the knowledge and tools now available to their members through PCU-WHS and NIDMAR. "We no longer want injured workers to be invisible until they are well. Employers don't see them. There's more they can do beyond 'Go see your doctor.'"

Bennett stresses, "We'll be training everyone, preparing them to get the message out, so employers understand their role and the opportunities to engage with injured workers to minimize time loss due to injury. We'll help employers put the pieces together to create an action plan that both accommodates the worker safely and reduces their own costs.

For further information on AgSafe initiatives, go to: www.agsafebc.ca .

PCU-WHS offer extended to associations across Canada

For more information on preferential online academic and continuing education opportunities and the DMSA tool now being offered to industry organizations and health and safety associations across Canada, contact PCU-WHS President and NIDMAR Executive Director, Wolfgang Zimmermann at wolfgang@nidmar.ca, or visit the PCU-WHS website at: www.pcu-whs.ca or the NIDMAR website at: www.nidmar.ca.