

SafeThink™—The Why! And The Need!

Many people today are very concerned that a significant percentage of our citizens are killed and injured through incidents that are **predictable and preventable**. We certainly see the financial pressure—predictable and preventable injuries have a very significant financial impact on the Alberta health care system and on all other health jurisdictions in Canada. The personal price to family, friends, and co-workers is huge. And, of course, the personal price to the injured person with respect to the financial, emotional, and physical aspects of life are also huge. The need to prevent injury is evident. Injuries and deaths occur all too frequently, year after year. Some types of incidents steadily increase. Canada is a very dangerous country to work in! Ken Georgetti, president of the 3.2 million Canadian Labour Congress, stated in his April 2008 *Day of Mourning* talk:

Canada, believe it or not, is one of the most dangerous places in the world to work. Since the start of this century, more than 7,500 men and women were killed because they went to work . . . That's nearly 1,000 people every year. With a five-day workweek, three, sometimes four people die every day because of something that happened at work. Whether that something was an injury, an attack, a poisoning or a disease caused by a lack of protection from workplace pollutants – the result is the same.

Alberta's recent **workplace deaths** are:

Year	2006	2007	2008
Alberta Workplace Deaths	124	154	166

This is a 24% increase in Alberta Workplace deaths from 2006 to 2007 and a 34% increase in deaths from 2006 to 2008. A closer look at the details behind these deaths shows several deaths each year are due to asbestos, a workplace health hazard.

In **Alberta farm-related deaths** (these are in addition to workplace deaths) we see:

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008
Alberta Farm Deaths	20	20	12	23

The average number of Alberta farm deaths over the past 10 years is about 18 deaths per year with serious injuries in the 900 to 1,000 injuries a year range.

In **Alberta traffic in 2007**, with respect to predictable and preventable deaths and injuries, we see:

Traffic Deaths	Traffic Injuries	Traffic Collisions
458	24,530	153,901

One can imagine the huge cost to our health care system of 24,530 serious injuries a year, not to mention the huge grief and economic burden for families. And these are only the predictable and preventable injuries. From 2007 to 2008, the number of traffic collisions in Alberta rose to 158,055. This rise of 4,154 collisions from 2007 to 2008 further shows the disappointing upward direction in Alberta traffic collisions.

Looking at **Alberta traffic deaths during 2003 to 2007**, we see a disturbing upward trend:

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Five Year Total
Traffic Deaths	385	387	466	453	458	2,149

With respect to all **Alberta injuries and deaths from predictable and preventable hazardous situations** in 2006, we see:

Deaths	Hospital Admissions	Emergency Dept. Visits
1,727	51,280	433,129

The point made by these facts is that there is a lot of room for improvement with respect to preventing incidents. Certainly all of us, young and old, have a responsibility to prevent injuries. We know that people can improve their abilities to be safer. The SafeThink program provides people with improved thinking skills to prevent injury. People learn to use a structured thinking strategy to identify and predict hazardous situations and related controls to keep themselves safe in the workplace, at home, on the road, and at play.

The need for Albertans to learn new safety skills is clear. The lack of safety skills is a problem in our increasingly fast-paced and complex technology-oriented society. One of the groups we are currently working with to develop SafeThink is a provincial safety advisory committee. This committee has recommended that youth in occupational specializations be the first to develop their SafeThink skills, beginning with Alberta high school students. At Safethink, we support individuals and groups who are interested in helping our youth keep themselves safe.

Source: Alberta Government