



BUILDEX Calgary 2009

Occupational Health and Safety

Worksite safety the prime contractor's responsibility

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With recent increases in penalties under Alberta Workplace Health and Safety legislation, it is crucial that site owners know where the burden of responsibilities falls.

That is the central message behind the seminar, Understanding Workplace Safety: Your Responsibilities as Prime Contractor, being presented Nov. 3 during the 10th Annual Buildex Calgary show.

The presenter of the seminar, Bill Todd, president of Calgary-based Cleanmax Inc., explained that the concept of prime contractor, created by the legislation, kicks

in when two or more employers are working simultaneously at the same site.

In such cases, the site owner has a responsibility to ensure the jobsite is safe.

"In safety, the responsibility and accountability flows uphill, and if it's been demonstrated that the site owner has not done due diligence to ensure that those contractors have a comprehensive workplace safety program, then ultimately the responsibility for an incident can lay with the site owner," Todd said, adding that the owners of a downtown Calgary project were recently charged as prime contractors after building debris material flew off the building during a windstorm

and killed a young child.

Todd pointed out that the concept of prime contractor does not apply solely to unfinished buildings.

"People think of it as a construction type of application, but no, it applies in every site that has an owner," he said.

"It could even apply to a homeowner; if you have two employers working on your home simultaneously, you are prime contractor for that site. That's the big thing. People just do not understand that even if your contractor has an incident, you can be held responsible if you haven't done your due diligence. You are at risk. It's kind of like driving without insurance. The

chances of something happening may be low, but if they do, it can be catastrophic."

Despite the more than tripling of financial penalties in 2008 from \$150,000 to \$500,000 for a first offence and/or six months in jail, as well as increased enforcement, Todd said he feels the message is still not getting through to the industry.

"And that's the big reason for my presentation — within our industry there is an incredible amount of ignorance about workplace safety, first of all, and certainly the role of prime contractor."

It is a situation that leaves Todd puzzled, particularly because of the overwhelming benefits of a safe

workplace.

"Certainly there are bottom line benefits, there's cost benefits, but also the benefit in creating a caring and compassionate workplace is huge — that's a huge benefit," Todd said, adding that safety training alone can add benefits in other ways.

"Your training goes up on all levels. When you're training for workplace safety, you're also engaging in more training for the actual job process, so your workers get better at what they do," he said.

Understanding Workplace Safety: Your Responsibilities as Prime Contractor will take place at Buildex Calgary Nov. 3 from 8:30 – 10 a.m.

Education

Some construction seminars of interest

Buildex Calgary is offering a number of seminars during the two-day event. Here is a quick peak at what seminars might be of interest to those in construction industry.

Tuesday Nov. 3

- No Guts, No Gain! A Program to Improve Your Effectiveness, Strengthen Your Resolve and Inspire You to Action
- The Law of Tendering: How the Rules of the Game Affect You and Your Projects
- Protecting Our Precious Resource: Water Conservation & Efficiency for New Construction. Why Does It Matter?
- Mould & Moisture Management in Alberta
- Sustainable Retrofits Without

Breaking the Bank

- Builders Liens
- Performative Architecture
- Reducing Impact to Preserve Water: Low Impact Development in Alberta
- The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of Materials Selection
- Building Envelope as the HVAC System
- What is Quality Assurance and How to Ensure Effective Implementation

Wednesday Nov. 4

- HVAC Systems & New Technologies: Understanding and Managing the Potential Conflict between Green Architecture, IAQ and Energy Efficiency
- Case Study: The Bow
- What Are They Thinking? Understanding the Different Generations

at Work

- Building Integrated Renewables
 - Biomimicry in the Human-Built Environment: Looking to the Intelligence of Nature
 - Are Green Buildings Healthy Buildings?
 - Conflict Resolution: Building Relationships through Structured Conversation
 - What to Do With All This Stuff? Waste Diversion for Renovations & Interiors
 - Transformation: When Creative Thinking Meets Business Strategy
 - Solar Energy: Deregulation, Accessibility and Application
 - Case Study: Art Gallery of Alberta
- To learn more about the individual seminars and its presenters, as well as start times and prices visit www.buildexcalgary.com.*