

June 18, 2021

Year End Message - MHSA Executive Director

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, workplaces including MHSA were thrust into unfamiliar circumstances. 2020 was certainly not a year that any of us expected and was full of uncertainty! Due to the pandemic the health side of Health & Safety had greater emphasis not just for MHSA but on a global scale. Covid-19 prompted significant change to the shape of work the MHSA conducts and how it is done, especially MHSA's training, COR, and our involvement with membership and industry.

MHSA followed the AB Governments recommended restrictions and guidelines. For a time, all face-to-face training was postponed, and employees of the association worked on a Rotating Work Schedule. MHSA's Management Team acted quickly to redirect regular activities, remain current with government updates and restrictions, and frequently touched base with employees. Increased online collaboration occurred and Virtual Instructor-Led courses became a top priority. MHSA Advisors worked diligently to learn how to navigate a virtual training platform and were ready to accept added responsibility in taking on this time sensitive task. Supporting documents such as exams, participant activities, and course evaluation forms had to be converted for ease of completion at a distance. MHSA ran the first virtual course April 9, 2020!

MHSA's COR Department participated with other Certifying Partners and Partnerships in Injury Reduction (PIR) to develop a Certificate of Recognition Contingency Plan, considering the COVID-19 pandemic. PIR announced that all 2020 Audit submissions were to be completed on a 'Document only' Audit Instrument. The MHSA COR team worked diligently to create the 2020 Document only Audit Instrument, obtained approval by PIR, and ensured its availability to all Certified MHSA Auditors. Additionally, MHSA's COR department took a proactive approach to assist companies in maintaining their COR during this time. They expediently developed a process and QA form to accompany the document only audit tool and created a Frequently Asked Questions document in response to the COR Contingency Plan. COR holders were contacted to ensure they had a complete understanding of the adjustments for 2020 and a COR Update section was added to the MHSA website.

MHSA ensured that we maintained regular contact to understand the needs of membership & industry. Even though face to face training and employer site visits were prohibited multiple times through the course of the year we actively participated in industry. We contacted 376 member companies during the height of the pandemic; to answer any questions or direct inquiries to suitable resources where appropriate. Several members of the MHSA approached us for guidance in the absence of their Safety Representative. In many instances we referred them to the Alberta Health Services website. We also continued to circulate course and information bulletins by way of email. With an overload of information on COVID-19, continual redirection and restrictions in place it became apparent that the pandemic was taking a toll on individuals mental health. MHSA chose to collaborate with AMSHA to sponsor mental health events including COVID-19 Safe Return to Work Virtual Workshop and Expert Panel" and "Competent Psychological Health and Safety Leader."

Employers, including MHSAs were focused on keeping their workers' healthy, safe, and doing their part to limit the risk of exposure by heading government recommendations. Membership was actively seeking resources to guide them in this unknown territory. MHSAs had to adapt what we used to do to meet the need. We were unable to offer Regional Update Meetings so instead a 3-part web session series was created. The theme: "Maintaining Your Health & Safety System Through a Downturn." Each date had a different focused topic "Maintaining Competency," "Safety Meetings & Work Site Inspections," and "Certificate of Recognition." These sessions were embraced by industry and offered at a very suitable time.

2020 was the first year that Certifying Partners/HSA's were required to report in to OHS on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU's). OHS System Priorities (slips, trips & falls, Psychosocial, and musculoskeletal disorders) were the focal point and through collaboration with other entities resources and/or courses were created to support government initiatives and red tape reduction. Employees of the MHSAs were involved in a great deal of committee work related to the System Priorities and with several working groups in a video conference capacity including:

- Strategic Steering Committee
- Psychosocial Working Group
- COR Harmonization
- SECOR
- ISO/COR Equivalency
- Scalable Audit Tool
- Auditor Qualifications Training & Certification

Our values are a fundamental part of the decisions made by MHSAs in our day-to-day operations. In 2020, we redefined our values with the support of our internal team and the MHSAs Board of Directors. Our Values, what they mean to us:

- **Integrity** – To be honest and act with honor.
- **Leadership** – The courage to influence a better future for the manufacturing industry.
- **Accountability** – We are responsible for giving the manufacturing industry a voice.
- **Collaboration** – We work together with organizations and industry to achieve our mission.
- **Passion** – We use our drive and commitment to energize, engage, and inspire others.

The highlight of the year was transitioning many in person courses to a virtual offering, and I am pleased to report that they are still being well received by industry. To end the year 81% of offered virtual courses were delivered to participants. Another focal point was the employees of the MHSAs and their ability to adapt as required. The MHSAs team of employees are a strong, dedicated group of individuals driven to assist the manufacturing industry. Each member of the team is a knowledgeable resource that is genuinely interested in making a difference. 2020 has certainly seen this team come together and step up when and where necessary. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank each member of the team for your commitment and dedication to the MHSAs, particularly during a year like no other. It is because of your commitment to the association that we continue to "achieve worksite wellness and reduce occupational injuries and illnesses in the manufacturing industry." Thank you!



Mike Bett
Executive Director

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HEALTH & SAFETY
ASSOCIATION**