

B.C. ASSOCIATION OF RESTORATION CONTRACTORS

Injury rate reduced by half since 2005



By John Preston

The B.C. Association of Restoration Contractors (BCARC), founded in 2005, is the first and currently the only safety association of its kind in North America. BCARC's sole purpose is to promote workplace safety within the restoration contractor industry.

NO SUBSIDIES

BCARC develops and delivers safety training for restoration industry workers as a registered non-profit organization. It is not subsidized in any way by the government; the Association receives 100 per cent of its funding from restoration firm levies.

BCARC currently has 140 member firms. They compete aggressively in such areas as price, product, service, emergency response times, use of technology, marketing and branding programs, but they do not compete on matters of safety.

SAFETY TRAINING

On behalf of all workers and member firms, the Association will search for best safety practices in the industry and deliver that safety message to all members. In this way, every worker and every firm has equal access to the best available workplace safety training.

How? First, BCARC assesses the widely available general safety training materials from organizations like WorkSafeBC (WSBC), the province's safety regulator. It also considers other provincial safety authorities as well as U.S. and U.K. safety bodies, which are generally at the forefront of workplace safety issues.

Second, BCARC has a Technical Advisory Committee – a 10-person group comprised of safety managers from member firms who volunteer their time and effort to research

and develop safety training programs and aids. The committee has already done ground-breaking work for the industry on hazard identification that is being copied across Canada and elsewhere.

Third, the Association has partnered with organizations like the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety to bring much of this training to workers in an online format, allowing them to access training from anywhere, anytime.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

One of the best measures of BCARC

asbestos-containing-materials (ACMs), contractors have a duty in law to protect the health of their workers – as well as anyone else visiting the site – from this deadly hazard. Though the legal requirements associated with proper cleanup are in place, reputable contractors would still feel a moral duty to protect workers from a high-hazard jobsite even if they weren't.

PROPER PROTOCOL

A safety-aware restoration contractor will identify and take steps to deal properly with ACM sites. The costs associated



The best measure of BCARC performance is WSBC's annual assessment based on the frequency and severity of workplace injuries.

performance is taken by WSBC by way of an annual assessment based on the frequency and severity of workplace injuries within the industry. When the Association was founded eight years ago, the industry average injury rate levy was 7.18 (the higher the levy, the worse the injury record). Over the years the levy has declined steadily. For 2013, the average levy is set at 3.46 – less than half what it was when BCARC was started.

LEGAL, MORAL DUTY

BCARC members would like their partners in the insurance claims and brokerage communities to understand that when a jobsite shows evidence of

with properly identifying and remediating ACM sites are unavoidable, yet this additional restoration step is viewed by some claims handlers as self-serving on the part of the restoration firm. That is not so.

BCARC members will not conduct business in a manner that exposes their workers to a hazardous jobsite unless and until safety protocols are in place. Asbestos and other deadly materials/organisms such as lead, mould, silica, sewage-based contaminants, crime/trauma scene pathogens, etc. need to be identified and treated with great care. **IW**



John Preston is the executive director of BCARC.