

Making the Service Sector Healthy and Safe

OSSA Partners with Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association

By Jason Hagerman

Inside information, access to resources and health and safety specialists: The Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association (ORHMA) gains much from its decade-long partnership with the Ontario Service Safety Alliance (OSSA). The OSSA also benefits, gaining credibility and clients in the service industry through the collaboration.

According to Michelle Saunders, Manager of Government Relations at the ORHMA, which represents more than 11,000 businesses at both the municipal and provincial levels of government and provides them with cost savings programs, the relationship began as a simple one based on health and safety information exchange, but has since grown.

For example, the Ministry of Labour (MOL) recently launched a series of blitz visits focused on addressing slips, trips and falls in the service sector, some of the most prevalent forms of worker injury in the service sector.

“[MOL inspectors] would show up at a workplace unannounced—at workplaces that they thought had exposure to a particular hazard,” says John Aird, Manager of Strategic Partnerships and Special Projects at OSSA.

“Many hospitality operators are intimidated by MOL and WSIB inspectors,” says Saunders, “and simply aren’t aware of their rights and responsibilities, as well as the things they can do to prepare for an inspection and to make it go smoothly.”

The OSSA brought information concerning how to prepare for these visits, to the ORHMA, whose members employ more young workers than any other sector.

The ministry knows this particular sector is prone to these kinds of accidents, says Aird, and is therefore more likely to



be visited by the MOL than others.

“How do I stock shelves... How do I get a whole tray of meals out to people at the table?” asks Aird. “There’s water, grease, heat sources, knives. The nature of the work exposes people to these hazards.”

The OSSA knew when these visits were going to begin, and developed an article to be printed in the ORHMA’s member newsletter, *Insider*, letting members know that the MOL would be conducting these visits. The article provided outlets for further information, and acted as a launch point for businesses to start addressing slip and fall concerns.

“We said, ‘what you need to do before the MOL shows up is go through the attached checklist, assess your exposure, what the prevalence of this hazard is in your workplace, and what are you doing about it. If you find you don’t have all the

right controls and systems in place, you need to develop a plan,’” explains Aird.

Through its work with the ORHMA, the OSSA has gained access to members in the industry, which means access to organizations that may have otherwise been unaware of the OSSA.

“How do you catch the attention of a busy business owner? You contact them through their industry association,” says Aird.

“OSSA has benefitted from increased recognition throughout the industry,” says Saunders. “And an endorsement from Canada’s largest provincial hospitality industry association.”

Most importantly, Aird believes the OSSA benefits because the partnership helps the association achieve its goal of making the service sector healthy and safe.

“Our common goal is to help operators in the hospitality industry access the resources they need so they can make improvements to their health and safety practices, and reduce accident rates which ultimately results in reduced WSIB costs,” says Saunders.

Members of the ORHMA, in turn, look to their association because it provides value in many ways. The ORHMA is the voice of the industry, speaking to the government and providing invaluable information related to running a business in the sector. It also conveys to its members the business advantage of focusing on health and safety.

“ORHMA members are looking for assistance and value to help them be more successful,” says Aird. “With the help of ORHMA, we provide the tools.” ▲

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