

# Vision<sup>at</sup>Work

OCCUPATIONAL VISION PLAN NEWSLETTER

## Harmac's stellar safety compliance garners OVP award

**H**armac Pulp Mill's rigorous health-and-safety plan is not only saving employees' eyesight, but is now winning awards as well.

The Nanaimo mill, owned by Pope and Talbot Ltd., has been named OVP's 2005 Eye Safety Award winner.

"We want to acknowledge Pope and Talbot for their efforts in keeping employees safe," says Dr. Don Vinge, an optometrist and chair of the OVP Committee.

In October 2005, Harmac revised their safety policy at its Nanaimo operation to require all employees to wear eye protection throughout the mill, rather than only at specific locales or when doing certain tasks.

The company's new policy possibly saved the eyesight of employees Ken Friesen and Derek Heyes.

"This award not only recognizes Harmac's exceptional dedication to safety, but celebrates the fact these two employees probably had their sight saved as a result," says Vinge.

Harmac's comprehensive policy saved Friesen, a 16-year employee and Duncan resident, from suffering severe eye damage. During a mechanical check of a forklift that was in the garage for repair, Friesen was sprayed in the face with high-pressure oil after starting the machine. Friesen's nose and mouth were filled with the dangerous substance, but his eyes were spared injury due to the fact he was wearing safety glasses.

Safety glasses also saved Heyes, a head balerman and 10-year employee, from certain injury.

During a routine examination of tied bales, he noticed a few wires did not meet company standards. In cutting and removing one of the loose wires, the sharp end of one flew towards his face. The wire would have struck Heyes's left eye had he not been wearing safety glasses. The force of the wire not only scratched the left lens, but it took two chips out of the lens centre.

"My optometrist told me that if it wasn't for my safety glasses, I would have lost my eye," says Heyes.

The OVP Eye Safety Award is an annual recognition program. The award recognizes an OVP client company that shows a stellar commitment to eye safety.

OVP companies can enter the annual award competition by submitting an application. Official award forms are available for download at [www.ovp.bc.ca](http://www.ovp.bc.ca), under Resources/Forms. Deadline for submission for OVP's 2006 Eye Safety Award is Dec. 15, 2006.

## Eye-injury claims reach \$6.4 million

**S**tatistics released by WorkSafe BC reveal that more than \$6.4 million was paid out in 2005 for workplace eye-injury claims. Eye-injury claims are also costly to B.C. industries in terms of lost profits and working days.

This concerns B.C. optometrist Dr. Don Vinge, chair of the Occupational Vision Plan, who says investing in proper safety eyewear should be a 'no-brainer' for any business.

"Eye injuries are costly considering post-incident recovery and care, never mind the emotional and human loss when a person



Photo: Harmac Pulp Mill

Ken Friesen, Harmac Pulp Mill, was sprayed in the face with high-pressure oil. Friesen's safety glasses saved his eyes from serious injury.

loses their sight. A pair of safety glasses can cost between \$150 and \$275, depending on whether or not prescription lenses are needed," says Dr. Vinge.

In 2005, 1,990 eye-injury claims were accepted for short-term or long-term benefits. The statistics were collected from various industries across the province. In total, 18,910 working days were lost.

The industry with the most eye injury claims for the year was metal and mineral products manufacturing, followed by general construction.

(Continued on page 3)

**ON-GUARD**  
SAFETY CORP.

INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH  
FASHION

## ► Essential eye exams underutilized: report

Workers tend not to go for regular eye exams unless they sense something is wrong, reveal Occupation Vision Plan (OVP) utilization reports.

The utilization reports indicate only 15 per cent of workers diligently visit their optometrist every two years. The alarming low number comes at a time when workplace eye-injury claims are on the rise. Safety officers need to promote their company's participation in OVP to protect their workers' vision and eye health.

The OVP encourages employees to visit an optometrist every two years to make sure that their eyes are healthy, prescriptions are correct and safety eyewear is functioning and fitting properly.

Through consultation, an OVP optometrist can determine the demands a specific workplace has on an employee's vision. The optometrist

can evaluate, test and provide the employee with not only proper safety eyewear, but also a prescription that reduces the chances of having an accident while doing precision work.

The ramifications of not utilizing the OVP could be one's eye health, which may result in job loss and significant hardship to one's family.

To ensure the health and safety of employees, companies participating in OVP subsidize the cost of safety eyewear for workers if new eyewear is needed.

Workers should go regularly for an eye exam. As employees age, a regular eye exam becomes even more important and should be given the same priority as an annual medical checkup.

Safety officers can order utilization reports for their company by contacting the BCAA-OVP office at 1-866-687-2226.

### Prescription safety eyewear: 3 easy steps:

1. Request an authorization form, as well as information on the company's arranged financial subsidy.
2. Choose an OVP optometrist at [www.ovp.bc.ca](http://www.ovp.bc.ca)
3. Bring along a valid prescription to the appointment. A valid prescription is one signed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist and is dated within the last two years. If it is older than two years, call to make an appointment. The optometrist will conduct an eye examination to assess the employee's current vision and eye health.



## Never take safety for granted

As this sign shows, all workplaces are vulnerable to injuries on the job – even sites with a record of nearly three-year's worth of accident-free days. OVP offers professional consultation and individually tailored programs to help your employees work safely.

## Welcome aboard

The British Columbia Association of Optometrists welcomes the following new client companies participating in the Occupational Vision Plan:

AMEC Dynamic Structures.....	Port Coquitlam
Canadian Forest Products (Plateau Division).....	Vanderhoof
Indalex Vancouver.....	Port Coquitlam
Komex International.....	Burnaby, Nanaimo and Victoria
The Teal-Jones Group.....	Surrey
Seaspan (Washington Marine Group).....	North Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo and Campbell River
Seastar Chemicals.....	Sidney
Wellco Energy Services Partnership .....	Calgary

Vision At Work, the Occupational Vision Plan newsletter, is published by the British Columbia Association of Optometrists. The newsletter is available online at [www.ovp.bc.ca](http://www.ovp.bc.ca)

OVP, a program of the BCAA, meets the needs of more than 300 client companies throughout British Columbia. Protecting workers' eyes for more than 20 years, OVP has a network of over 270 doctors of optometry participating in more than 80 communities throughout BC.

Material published in Vision at Work may be reproduced, but must be attributed to source.

**Contact us**  
100 – 10751 Shellbridge Way  
Richmond, B.C. V6X 2W8  
Tel: 604-270-6095 or 1-866-687-2226  
Email: [ovp@optometrists.bc.ca](mailto:ovp@optometrists.bc.ca)  
Website: [www.ovp.bc.ca](http://www.ovp.bc.ca)

**Comments / ideas**  
Vision at Work, as well as our website, is always looking for articles, comments, ideas, interesting stories or questions from the workplace. Please e-mail us at [ovp@optometrists.bc.ca](mailto:ovp@optometrists.bc.ca)

 British Columbia Association of Optometrists  
[www.whatcouldbemoreimportant.com](http://www.whatcouldbemoreimportant.com)

## ► Glaucoma: the silent thief

Unlike many other eye conditions, glaucoma – one of the most common causes of blindness in Canada – can strike without any symptoms. Each year, more than one in 100 British Columbians are diagnosed with glaucoma, according to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind.

Glaucoma is referred to as the “silent thief of sight” for good reason, says Dr. Mary Lou Riederer, past president of the BC Association

### Eye-injury claims

(Continued from page 1)

Wearing safety eyewear isn't just good business sense, it's the law. British Columbia's Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, administered by WorkSafe BC, states that: “a worker must wear properly fitting safety eyewear appropriate to the conditions of the workplace if handling or exposed to materials which are likely to injure or irritate the eyes.”

Dr. Vinge says it's important to remember that different types of safety glasses are needed for different occupations and recommends that businesses and employees consult with an optometrist before choosing safety glasses. Optometrists can provide insight as to what best protects the eyes when working in different environments.

of Optometrists. The disease of the optic nerve is usually, but not always, caused by an increase in pressure within the eye, resulting in permanent nerve damage, complete loss of peripheral vision, and/or severe, unrelenting eye pain.

“You can have glaucoma and have no idea until you've permanently lost vision,” says Riederer. “A comprehensive eye exam by an optometrist can detect it before it causes

damage. Without a doubt, this is one disease where early detection makes a significant difference to the outcome.”

Symptoms vary from no early warning signs in the case of primary open-angle glaucoma, to pain, blurred vision, and the appearance of coloured rings around lights, in the case of acute angle-closure. The latter requires immediate attention.



A plane flies across the sky.

The neighbour goes out to get his paper – in his boxers.

The mailman was here (3 bills and 1 postcard).

The cat's basking in the sun.

Mmm, cookies. I'll just have 1...um...2...OK, 3, but that's it.

Look at that – there's some fluff on the carpet. Oh, well.

It's only 9:45. My watch must be fast.

## Notice board

The OVP has participated in the following events in 2005:

- British Columbia Association of Optometrists OPTOFAIR
- British Columbia Association of Optometrists Continuing Education Seminar
- Langley Eyecare Centre's Dr. Karen Mudry visited Lantec Industries to discuss eye health issues and the OVP with employees

2006 safety tradeshow:

- B.C. Human Resource Managers Conference Exhibition April 20 – 21, Victoria Conference Centre
- Western Conference on Safety May 8 – 9, Hyatt Regency, Vancouver

## With Varilux, you won't miss a thing.

Varilux Progressive lenses adapt to all points of your vision. They provide unparalleled vision and clarity at any distance: near, far and peripheral...instantly. We didn't just invent progressive lenses – we're always looking to progress. Ask your eye care professional about them today.

VARILUX®



www.essilor.ca