



NEWS RELEASE

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WORKSAFE NB TARGETS OPERATORS OF POWERED MOBILE EQUIPMENT IN NEW SEATBELT CAMPAIGN

Buckle up and stay alive – because you're not the only one along for the ride!

This is the message WorkSafeNB is promoting in a new campaign targeted at operators of motorized vehicles, such as forklifts, tractors, and backhoes. The campaign was launched today with radio ads, and is supplemented with materials such as a hazard alert, poster, and decals.

"Since 2005, three workers have died because they were not wearing their seatbelts. On top of that, several near-misses and serious injuries have occurred," said Richard Blais, chief compliance officer with WorkSafeNB. "We've launched this campaign to remind both workers and employers that seatbelts must be worn not only in cars and trucks, but in heavy equipment and other motorized vehicles, and that the law will be enforced."

Blais said that many workers who wear seatbelts in their personal vehicles do not wear them in the powered mobile equipment they use at work. The motorized vehicles are equipped with two different types of roll over protective structures (ROPS) – those with a cab and those without, he explains. "We don't know why they don't wear their seatbelts – whether they feel these vehicles go too slow to pose a risk or that they believe the ROPS will keep them safe. But speed isn't a factor. Collisions at low speeds can result in injuries, and in vehicles with ROPS, the deaths are occurring when drivers are ejected and the machine rolls over on top of them. And in one instance, a worker in a vehicle with a cab was ejected through the cab's open door.

Others find them "uncomfortable", but there are things much more uncomfortable, he adds, things such as losing work or ending up with some type of disability. "It brings to mind a poster I saw once that said 'Seatbelts are not as confining as a wheelchair,'" Blais said.

"Whatever the reason, we must change the culture around powered mobile equipment. Operators must be made aware of the risks of not wearing a seatbelt, not only from being ejected outside the vehicle but to minimize the risk of injury within an enclosed cab."

While the campaign's message is an emotional one, asking workers to think about family (they're not the only ones along for the ride), WorkSafeNB will take a hard approach to enforcement of seatbelt use.

Our health and safety officers will ensure not only use, but that seatbelts are present and in proper working condition. "In some instances, we've found seatbelts were actually removed. Violations can result in written orders, fines, and even stop-work orders," he said.

ABOUT WORKSAFENB

WorkSafeNB administers no-fault workplace accident and disability insurance for employers and their workers, funded solely through employer assessments. WorkSafeNB is committed to preventing workplace injuries and illness through education and the enforcement of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.