



ASK AN RSA

With Suzanne Jackson, Interior & Kootenay

In this monthly feature, we invite readers to submit a question for a BCCSA Regional Safety Advisor (RSA) to address. This month's RSA is Suzanne Jackson, who serves the Interior and Kootenay Region.

Question: What is the difference between everyday injuries and serious or fatal injuries in construction – and why does it matter to the way we manage safety?

Answer: For a long time, many companies believed that if they reduced small injuries, the incidence of serious injuries and deaths would also go down. Research now shows this is not always true. Serious injuries and fatalities (SIFs) usually come from different kinds of work and different conditions than small cuts and sprains.

To prevent SIFs, construction companies need to pay special attention to high-risk work, strong safety controls, good reporting, and learning.

Key Considerations

Stopping serious and fatal injuries starts with focusing on the kind of work that can really hurt or kill someone, not just everyday sprains and first-aid cases.

Three things make a big difference:

1. Pay extra attention to jobs where one mistake could be deadly, such as working at heights, crane work, or excavation and trenching. Make sure the key protections are in place and used properly. Both planning and execution of safe work are critical.
2. Direct focus to the big risks at pre-job safety meetings by asking: “What’s the one thing today that could seriously hurt or kill someone, and how are we controlling it?”
3. Make it safe to speak up. Workers should be able to report hazards and close calls without fear of blame. When something goes wrong, look at instructions, training, tools, time pressure, and communication, not just “worker error.” Fixing these system issues makes everyone safer.

Bottom Line

Small injuries don't always show you where someone could be killed or badly hurt. To better prevent serious injuries and deaths, companies need to make sure the most important safety controls are in place and workers speak up about close calls.

Need Help?

Your Regional Safety Advisor is available at no cost to help you use this SIF-focused approach on your projects.

Contact us: rsa@bccsa.ca or [Regional Safety Advisors: BC Construction Safety Alliance \(BCCSA\)](#).