



August 2022 Edition

[What's Connecting the Global OHS community?](#) Five things heard at the XXII World Congress on Safety and Health at Work (*Canadian Institute for Work and Safety, 2021, At Work, Issue 106, Toronto*)

"Prevention in the Connected Age" was the theme of the XXII World Congress on Safety and Health at Work. From the many topics connecting the occupational health and safety community, summarise five key ones.

Background Information

<i>Held:</i>	Every three years
<i>Dates:</i>	September 20-23, 2021
<i>Location:</i>	Online
<i>Co-hosted by:</i>	Institute for Work & Health (IWH) and the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)
<i>Delegates:</i>	Around 2000, occupational health and safety (OHS) professionals, labour and employer representatives, service providers and policy makers
<i>Organiser:</i>	International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Social Security Association (ISSA)
<i>Scope:</i>	Keynotes, technical sessions, symposia, posters, and entries into the International Media Festival for Prevention (IMFP).

World Congress delegates heard and took part in conversations on an array of prevention topics that gave rise to the following high level themes:

1. [Social dialogue improves OHS outcomes](#)

Prevention efforts are more likely to succeed when they are developed by government, employer and worker representatives together. Numerous success stories had tripartism as a common denominator: from New Zealand's strategy to reduce forestry deaths, to Canada's involvement in a new ILO convention on eliminating violence and harassment at work. The emphasis in this learning was on workforce engagement. OHS initiatives will only succeed with the participation of workers and their representatives.

2. [OHS professionals must address both new and traditional hazards](#)

The OHS world needs to stay vigilant against old hazard, while recognizing other new hazards related to the technological changes. Traditional OHS risks deserves our full



attention: two million workers die every year at work, around the world. Workers are exposed to new physical and psychological safety risks from IT trends including:

- artificial intelligence and machine algorithms setting task assignment and work pace demands
- networked equipment and facilities being hijacked by malicious hackers
- employment relationships being eroded by service and production models based on platform-enabled microwork.
- remote or telework carries risks such as isolation, depression, domestic violence and inability to disconnect.

Given remote or telework was adopted nearly overnight around the world at the onset of the pandemic, risks with this kind of work need more attention.

3. Safety culture matters

Whether discussing emerging risks or long-standing health and safety challenges, speakers and conference participants returned often to the potency of safety culture. The term refers to the Safety Culture was a potent concept that presenters and delegates kept returning to. This term refers to the shared belief, that is embraced by everyone throughout the organisation, that all accidents are preventable. In other words, no one should be hurt or sickened by or at work. ISSA's Vision Zero program at the previous World Congress was discussed. Since then, over 15,000 enterprises, organisations and OHS trainers have signed up to this campaign which promotes zero harm as a message of hope for inspiring enthusiasm.

4. The pandemic has taught many OHS lessons

Lessons, including some that are yet to be fully understood, are plentiful from the pandemic. Presenters at the Congress discussed topics such as;

- the importance of social security systems in times of emergency
- the need for systems to be flexible in their response
- the need to protect the most vulnerable workers (especially migrant and informal sector workers)
- importance of OHS to public health
- the need for good data-collection systems on work exposures.

5. The power of storytelling

Communication is as important as ever but there is a shift away from the stats and facts approach to qual data, including storytelling. It can bring different perspectives into focus, deepen empathy, and make messages stick. This was evident in the creative and innovative entries from around the world to the [International Media Festival for Prevention](#).



Another comms shift is to send health and safety messages, multiple times a day, in different ways and on many platforms and channels.