



Announcer:

It's time for the IHSA Safety Podcast.

Enzo Garritano:

Welcome to the *IHSA Safety Podcast*. This is Enzo Garritano, CEO of IHSA, Infrastructure Health and Safety Association, and today we're joined with our new Chief Prevention Officer [CPO] from the Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development, Dr. Joel Moody. Welcome, Dr. Joel.

Dr. Joel Moody:

Hey, Enzo. Great to be here.

Enzo Garritano:

Thanks for joining us again today. We thought we'd have a podcast around who the new CPO is, for the benefit of all our listeners, maybe a little bit of your background, and where you think this province is going with health and safety. Again, thanks for joining us. Yeah, just starting off about a little bit about your background. We know you came from the Electrical Safety Authority, perhaps we can step back a little bit and go back to your origins and maybe where you grew up. I know from an education perspective, we've seen your bio and there's a lot of different schools you've been to and different designations and degrees that you've received. So maybe we can talk a little bit about that. Joel, if you can start off maybe where you grew up.

Dr. Joel Moody:

Yeah. No, thanks, Enzo and just for listeners, happy to be with you once again. So a varied background, if we can call it that. As you said, I grew up originally in Alabama, in the Southern United States. A very small town, about 14,000 people, but luckily, and fortunately for us, the major industry in my city was a textile corporation called Russell Corporation or Russell Athletic. You may have been familiar with them, wearing some of their sweatshirts or seeing some of their uniforms. They were very big within my city, employed a lot of people and because of that, we were very fortunate to have a very good education system. For example, I was able to take Russian in Alabama my senior year, as an example.

They also were very big on education because from their standpoint, having a well-educated population group in which to draw the talent to work for the corporation was so important. If you can think about that beginning of being led down, both from an academic standpoint, having friends who went to the trade schools, we would call them the junior colleges, to make sure that they knew their trade and then they would have a job at the end of the day working for the company, two, three generations, it was not unheard of. Education has always been very big and I was fortunate enough to receive a scholarship. Basically, it was a full room and board academic scholarship to any university of my choosing. I just had to get in.

Enzo Garritano:

Wow. Great option for you.

Dr. Joel Moody:

And so I went to Duke. No, yeah, thanks. And so, yeah, a lot of work. So went to Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, and majored in engineering. As part of the scholarship from Russell, you also had a job coming back during the summer. I majored in civil and environmental engineering and then came back to work for Russell in the summer in their engineering department and their health and safety department. Once again, you can probably imagine as a company, I'm making sure their workers are safe. So yeah, cotton dust sampling, dosimeters with noise, hearing protection. Did that basically since I was 17-

Enzo Garritano:

Wow. Early start.

Dr. Joel Moody:

... working in the summers with the corporation.

Enzo Garritano:

Yeah, that's a great start.

Dr. Joel Moody:

Of course, then working on some heavy civil projects with them, road construction, bringing in different mechanisms of boilers and pressures, pressure devices. So had a very good knowledge and on the job training, if you can call it that way. But for me, it was really about maintaining health and safety, and it was about finding ways that we kept people safe from being harmed. That's where, I wouldn't say I pivoted into public health, but civil environmental engineering was actually a good lead-up. People always ask, "Well, how did you get involved in public health?" Well, I remind people, especially growing up in the southern states, originally, we had a lot of malaria, yellow fever, diseases that were spread by mosquitoes.

Enzo Garritano:

Right.

Dr. Joel Moody:

I would always remind people, "Well, yeah, what were the changes in the society that really helped get those diseases out of the population?" It was the engineers building the dams. It was the engineers building the water systems. That's what got me into public health and epidemiology and international health. I went to Alabama, Birmingham, so UAB [University of Alabama at Birmingham], not the Crimson Tide.

Enzo Garritano:

Okay.

Dr. Joel Moody:

People always think of Alabama University, Alabama football, different part of the Alabama system, but this is where the School of Public Health was. Great teachers that really allowed me to further that question about where do diseases come from and vectors and bacteria, viruses. I did my Masters of Public Health with a concentration in infectious diseases because it kind of made sense at looking at ways to use engineering control methods. For my project, I actually looked at how do we configure ventilation systems in order to prevent spread of tuberculosis in hospitals? All of those things in order to try to, once again, keep the patients safe, keep the staff safe, and we moved from there. At the end of the day, just more history, spent some time in South America doing research. I was in Peru for a couple of years doing infectious disease work. And then-

Enzo Garritano:

Is this post-grad or is this-

Dr. Joel Moody:

... went to medical school.

That was post. Yeah. Yeah. Actually, I had a fellowship post-masters to do that Infectious Disease Fellowship in South America, in Lima, Peru, Actually. A wonderful experience seeing how other parts of the world live, places, developing countries where they don't have access to many of the devices that we have here. When we talk about occupational health and safety, what does it truly mean to have an integrated system in these places that didn't exist?

Enzo Garritano:

How do you bring all those experiences then, stepping forward a little bit, coming back to landing in Canada. If you can maybe bring us to that. So you've done your masters, you're doing a research in Lima, Peru, and after that, are you continuing on with your education at that point, or are you starting to move now towards landing in Canada?

Dr. Joel Moody:

Yeah, so went to school one more time before that, so that's where I went to medical school. I had always wanted to go into medicine, and population health/public health was really my interest. And then was in California for my residency.

Enzo Garritano:

I see.

Dr. Joel Moody:

That's where the opportunity came about, my preceptor during my residency said, "Hey, I have some friends at the U of T," University of Toronto, "that do this type of research that I know you're interested in about cancer and genetics, so why don't you go check them out?" So had that opportunity to come up, interviewed at U of T and got accepted, and that's where I started my fellowship-

Enzo Garritano:

Wow.

Dr. Joel Moody:

... in oncology. Was doing work at the time. The goal was always to come to Toronto, do the fellowship, get that additional training, and then go back to the states. But proverbial history, you're at school and you find your significant other.

Enzo Garritano:

Oh, this story is over-

Dr. Joel Moody:

I met my wife and-

Enzo Garritano:

... and over again. Sounds-

Dr. Joel Moody:

Yes, yes. I keep repeating. So met my wife and we have been married and have been in Canada for almost 15 years now.

Enzo Garritano:

Right. That's awesome. That's awesome. That's a good story. That's a story about with all good intentions of going back home, because people always want to go back home. But seeing the opportunities here, and as you said, meeting your significant other, it's a difficult pull or decision to make, and I think we're all better for it now. So no, we're glad that you decided to stick around. Maybe moving on, so how did you move from that activity with U of T in Oncology and your interest in that sector of industry of public health into maybe your last role at Electrical Safety Authority?

Dr. Joel Moody:

Somehow a headhunter had received my resume, CV, whatever you want, and at the time, they said that there was this organization that was looking to really understand what were the causes of electrical injury and what are some interventions that could be developed to reduce those injuries, in both the workforce and in the general public. They said that looking for someone with an epidemiology background, but they also said your skill as an engineer would also be of benefit. So I said, "Sure, would

love to do so." Because most people, if you think from the U.S., we always refer to the Centers for Disease Control or the CDC.

Enzo Garritano:

Right.

Dr. Joel Moody:

But we also forget that at the end of it's also Centers for Disease Control and Injury Prevention. That's the additional part of epidemiology that has been fascinating for me is about injury prevention. ESA, Electrical Safety Authority was looking for someone to help them, and they were really looking for understanding data and trends and using the epidemiology to break down root causes, identify sectors where we had increased risk of fatality or injury, and then develop plans that both the ESA with the stakeholders could rally behind in order to affect change.

Enzo Garritano:

Right. And again, a number of different stakeholders within that scope, I would suggest, but whether it be the stakeholders directly doing the work, or the public, or utilities themselves, how do you find that relationship or that engagement with stakeholders? How do you feel that that part contributes to your overall work as an epidemiologist?

Dr. Joel Moody:

I've always looked at it from the standpoint of no one person, no one entity has all of the pieces to the puzzle and I'll put it from that standpoint because injury prevention is a puzzle. It does take collaboration. It does take co-ordination within the system in order to put the pieces together to show what the picture is at the end of the day. So from the epi world, we've always had to collaborate, be it with physicians, with the scientists, with the ergonomics, with the industrial hygienists, all of those skills are so important. That has created my philosophy about what I do now with the Prevention Office and even organizations as great as IHSA, working together within the system using the expertise that exists. You hire great people for their expertise-

Enzo Garritano:

Absolutely.

Dr. Joel Moody:

... their passion, their knowledge, how do we bring them all together, as an example. That's really what, I guess, I pride myself on is being able to bring all the parties together because together we are stronger than the individual task that we may be taking.

Enzo Garritano:

No, absolutely, agreed 100 per cent there. Subject matter expertise is so important and I think that's where the system, if we want to talk about the health and safety system in Ontario, has a significant

benefit is the use of and reliance on those subject matter experts. To your point, not everybody can do everything, but certainly those parts of the puzzle need to be there, and that subject matter expertise is what we found ourselves on. Without that foundation, we're certainly in a different position. But when you consider that, in coming to the role as the new Chief Prevention Officer, you've mentioned already that that was a significant piece of what you do and how you want to do it. Where do you see some major opportunities maybe with regards to the different subject matter expertise, or the different associations and the system partners overall in moving Ontario into a better place? From a health and safety perspective?

Dr. Joel Moody:

As you know, we've just rolled out the new strategy, the Prevention Works strategy, and as part of that, we've identified the four pillars around data, using a collaborative approach, working with our small businesses. So I think those pieces are so important because when we look at how even the strategy was developed, we had to talk to those subject matter experts. We had to learn from the people in Ontario themselves about what was concerning them the most and so based upon that, we rolled it out. At the end of the day, it's about implementation. I think to your question, and so where do we find opportunities for those subject matter experts to help develop the interventions? As part of that is, how do we then measure the impacts that the strategy is having on the system? So definitely for me, very much committed to making sure that our system has the tools that we need to measure those intended outcomes, because we know that Ontario is one of the safest jurisdictions in Canada. So how do we continue to have that strong safety record and even improve it, because I know we can?

Enzo Garritano:

Right. If we look at the pandemic response, what are your thoughts along these lines of our response overall as a province and what we learned from COVID and how that can maybe move us forward in this vein that you just talked about?

Dr. Joel Moody:

Yeah. Well, I think one of the most important things from a response, if I could maybe talk about that one to begin with, is communication. We want to have very clear, relevant, and consistent communication that always provides the stakeholders, the audience, with what they need to do and why. Throughout the pandemic, I've heard, I've lived through, that there's so much confusion, the frustration that can happen when information is really hard to find. How do you provide the right guidance, from both our knowledge, the situation that presents because things change so quickly. I remember days early on, you would get the communication and then two hours later something would change.

It's always evolving in a rapid environment. But one of the things that I can say is through planning, and we talk about work safe planning, safety standards, frameworks, how do you design or put into a system where it talks about risk? So having a risk-based occupational and safety health approach to managing the workplace response, to me, is key. That's really from that public health perspective, is we try to understand risk and then minimize it as much as possible. But you have to have all of the individuals, be

it the C-suite, be it the frontline worker, the middle management, all working together as a team in order to find ways to minimize the risk.

Enzo Garritano:

Right. Certainly that's what we advocate for, I think, across the board is a health and safety management system that encourages that input from all the different workplace parties. As we know, whether it's the owner who starts off with the entire safety culture of the company, or whether it's their supervisors who are reflective of the owner's attitudes and perspectives to the workers, to the joint health and safety committee members and reps, it really does take that team effort and full engagement to move us forward. We've seen the successes of it and we've seen the failures when it's not working well. So when we talk about new initiatives and new work coming out of the strategic plan, something that's just released now, the Workplace Safety Plan Builder, maybe just have a little discussion around something of that nature and those tools that are going to be useful to engage the different stakeholders and engage the different workplace parties in improving their health and safety outcomes.

Dr. Joel Moody:

Yeah. The Workplace Safety Plan Builder has been a great news story. It's an online tool that was developed by some of my staff that really makes it easier for businesses or organizations to build or update a work plan that's customized for them. As you know, the Work Safety plan built from some of the requirements in the *Reopening Ontario Act*, we use that as the first guidance. But it's really designed, once again, to have the technological ability. We have Zoom. We've had Teams. We've been able to meet virtually, and we use technology. How do we use the technology, in this case, to help the businesses, to help, especially those small businesses, develop a customized plan where they may not all have that same level of expertise as a larger business.

A person can log into the system, they can answer a few questions that are very easy. We have some check boxes because we want to make it a plan that's not just going to sit on the shelf. This is a plan that really is about, once again, decreasing risk, providing opportunity for those businesses to think about what are the communications that we need to do, both to our staff, to our patrons potentially. Because you can print it, you can post it, you can put it up for public display, but at the end of the day, it's really about helping those businesses think through in a methodical fashion, what are the different places that they need to either create, develop, improve upon, such that it keeps their workforce safe and healthy at the end of the day.

Enzo Garritano:

And that is our joint goal of making sure that everybody gets home at the end of the day. We want to thank you for your efforts in joining the Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development as our Chief Prevention Officer in achieving those goals of getting everyone home safely every day, healthy and safe, of course, from all aspects, including mental health and workplace violence and harassment. Which I know that is something that also is very high on your priority list when it comes to your goals and where I think you lean on in regards to health and safety in the workplace. Any comments around mental health and equity, diversity, and workplace violence and harassment?

Dr. Joel Moody:

Yeah, definitely. As part of my ethos, again, it has been around, questions around anti-racism. At the end of the day, we want people to be able to come to work and make an honest day's living, be able to provide for their families in an environment that's safe for them. This transcends once again to the mental health standpoint as well. If you are having some challenges and having mental health challenges, you're not able to be, from a work standpoint, fully productive. So downstream, quality of life, working with your family, working with your colleagues on the job site, those are all very important pieces. Because I think all of those aspects are tied together. You cannot separate the individual from the work and all of the characteristics of that individual come to the workplace with them.

Enzo Garritano:

Right. Right.

Dr. Joel Moody:

Because many businesses at the end of the day want to be productive and so how do you have a well workforce is so vitally important to the productivity, not only of the business, but for those individuals as well.

Enzo Garritano:

Yep, no, critical pieces of the puzzle, as we talked about in parts of the puzzle that we need to all work on in order to get this province to really, again, even emerging out of the COVID-19 pandemic, is to get us back on our feet and to progress in a very strong, healthy, and safe environment. Thinking about just your diverse professional history, we've talked a lot about where you came from and how you came through and landed in Toronto. Hopefully, there's a lot of diverse interests also outside of the workplace. Maybe you can comment on those as some parting words for us. What keeps you busy outside of work and what keeps you interested outside of work?

Dr. Joel Moody:

Family, I love my family. I have two young girls that keep me busy, and of course my wife. We like to do many things around the house, helping plant, do some gardening and things of that nature, cooking. But also for me, I enjoy music. So I played piano, took lessons for 16 years or so.

Enzo Garritano:

Wow.

Dr. Joel Moody:

Play saxophone, so it was really those types of things. The house is always full of music.

Enzo Garritano:

That is awesome.

Dr. Joel Moody:

Yeah.

Enzo Garritano:

Have the kids picked up on some of your skills?

Dr. Joel Moody:

They are beginning to. I definitely don't want to force them where they don't want to go, but oldest daughter, we did get her a drum set, an electronic drum set. She's having fun putting on her headphones and just hitting things other than the pots and pans right now. So that's very helpful.

Enzo Garritano:

And a smart move for you to make sure it was an electronic set, so yeah, so you do have that silence in the house while you can maybe play your piano or other instruments. That's fantastic. Well, again, I want to thank you for joining us today and learning more about you as our new Chief Prevention Officer. We definitely look forward to working with you in really moving this province forward, like I said before, in a very healthy and safe way, and one that recognizes the diversity and equity that's required in this province to really be a full community of a province. Again, thank you for those efforts, and again, we're hoping that we have great things ahead of us, and we'll be able to help contribute towards all that jointly. So again, thanks for joining us today, again with our new Chief Prevention Officer in Ontario. We look forward to our efforts in the future with you. Thanks again.

Dr. Joel Moody:

Thanks, Enzo. Have a great afternoon.

Announcer:

The *IHSA Safety Podcast*. For more episodes, tips and all things safety, go to IHSAsafetypodcast.ca. Thanks for listening.