



Announcer

It's time for the *IHSA Safety Podcast*.

Ken Rayner:

Welcome to the *IHSA Safety Podcast*. I'm Ken Rayner, and I'm your host for this episode on health and safety concerns in truck yards. And I'm pleased to welcome back to the podcast one of IHSA's subject matter experts on transportation health and safety, Michelle Roberts, who recently became our VP of Stakeholder and Public Relations. So congratulations, Michelle, following the retirement of our very good friend, Dean Dunn.

So it's great to have you on today's episode as we're going to discuss why yard safety hazards need to be controlled, we're going to get into what findings came forth from the root cause analysis workshop that you and members of your team conducted with Ontario's transportation industry, and what practical tips and controls carriers should consider to prevent yard-related incidents. So this is going to be a great podcast. Great to have you back, Michelle.

Michelle Roberts:

Thank you, Ken. I really appreciate that and I look forward to the opportunity at IHSA in my new role as vice president. And thanks for having me back on the podcast. We've done a few of these together, many of which have focused on road safety. And as you said, another important item related to our transportation elements is the safety in the yard. So we want to shift our discussion today to really talk about that, and we're going to be focusing more on yard safety, but specifically in trucking yards.

Ken Rayner:

Trucking yards. Okay. And it seems like that gets maybe less attention than the road safety when the trucks are on the road. Is that fair? Is part of the focus on this to raise attention to the hazards within the yard itself?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, 100 per cent correct. I think some of the reasons behind maybe why road safety and when something happens on the road, there's a big public awareness of it because typically those incidents are very tragic. They may be happening on the highway, the general public is involved. There's typically maybe a mass property damage or infrastructure damage. There's lots of distractions on the highway, disruptions, traffic, and everything else that happens on the road when there might be a collision involving a large commercial vehicle.

But in essence, the yard safety, so that's the piece of the puzzle where the vehicle's not sharing the road with the public. They're in a yard, distribution and warehouse. And not only is it less public awareness, but also we have a lot less stats and information that drives some of that attention.

And one of the issues that's pretty unique in the yard safety in the transportation sector is that it is multi-jurisdictional. So we have carriers that are provincially regulated, so stats would be reported under the Ministry of Labour under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. Or you could have federal carriers, so that they are regulated under the *Canada Labour Code* and the ESDC [Employment and Social Development Canada] oversees them. So different sources of data. Plus you have WSIB [Workplace Safety and Insurance Board], so firms that are registered under WSIB. And then in the transportation industry, we also have self-insured vehicles and carriers. So a lot of that means the data's in multiple different places and sometimes it's hard to bring that all together and therefore it doesn't get maybe the same impact on the trends.

But needless to say, we do need to pay attention to it. We do need to. Unfortunately, the yard itself does create a lot of hazards to workers, both in the vehicle and outside the vehicle. So that's why we wanted to embark on a process to help us really understand what are the root causes that are contributing to incidents that are happening in the yard? And pulling together all those subject matter experts from the industry to help guide us so that we could be focused a little bit more strategically in the yard safety element.

Ken Rayner:

Okay. And I take it the yard is a bit of a different environment than the road. And there's terminology that gets used in the yard, things like shunting or shunters. And maybe you can help explain that to our listeners because I think some of the hazards that you're going to explain are probably very apparent to our listeners and others maybe need a little bit more explanation.

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, that's a really good point. There's a lot of different terminology. The hazards itself in the yard relate to, there's a lot of moving pieces, literally, like moving vehicles in and out. And a shunter, per se, is not necessarily a designated driver that's going to take that load or tractor trailer onto the highway and deliver it. It's normally a yard shunter is a person designated to move the trailers on and off the bay for loading, moving them off, maybe parking them somewhere else in the yard until it is ready for a load or a pickup. So that shunter is typically using maybe a designated vehicle that in some cases may not be road worthy, and their primary task is to move the trailers on and off the bay.

But essentially, some of those hazards in the yards that create risk is the conditions. So if you visualize a warehouse, a distribution center, there's lots of vehicles coming in and out. They're not all necessarily from the same employer. They could be a 24-hour operation. So then that means there's lots of factors in there, it's busy all the time. You could have pedestrians or other workers in and around the tractor trailers in the yard. And delivery schedules are very hectic. You understand the just-in-time principle of trying to get loaded and unloaded and back on the road, get those goods delivered.

And one of the hazards that we definitely see when we do look at the trends that probably is the most catastrophic or causes the most tragic incidents occur when the vehicle itself is reversing. So if you

visualize a tractor trailer in the yard backing up onto a bay to load or unload, there are a lot of factors in there that could increase the risk of an incident in the yard. In particular, the blind spots that surround the vehicle itself, poor lighting a lot of times. And when we get into some of the details, we heard that a lot, poor lighting or reflection.

You can think the congestion in a warehouse distribution centre, there's a lot of loud noises. Engines are running. The trailers themselves could be like what we call reefers or refrigerated units, and therefore, they have engines that are running even though the tractor itself might not be running. So there's a lot of that kind of noise as well, which could be a distraction.

And some of those are the unique factors that we need to pay more attention to because they do create hazards in the yard that aren't the same as when we're driving on the road.

Ken Rayner:

Wow. Yeah, so sounds like this workshop and the root cause analysis that you conducted was very applicable and very much needed in terms of, it sounds like the yard itself is a very different environment that perhaps just has those hazards and the means to control those hazards just has to be highlighted a little bit more. So Michelle, I think the listeners would really appreciate hearing more about that workshop. How did this all come together? How did the workshop... Maybe you can just explain a bit about the process that you used.

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah. And it is a unique process and many safety professionals probably understand the point of a root cause is why do we do this? And it's really to drill down and identify what are the contributing factors that need to be fixed, like the root, the bottom of the issue so that we can make an impact on prevention.

So the process and methodology that we use, we adopted from the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training, and Skills Development, and many of our system partners are using the same methodology. And essentially, what we're doing is we are using a methodology of the "why, why, why, why, why?" It's the simplest way to explain it. So when someone says, "Well, why was there a collision?" Okay, well, the vehicle was speeding. Okay, well, why was the vehicle speeding? Right? Well, because of poor scheduling, right? Oh, okay. Well, why was there poor scheduling? Oh. And you keep asking why until you actually get down to the fundamental problem so that we can focus not necessarily just on the behavior of speeding, but how can we fix the problem of scheduling that led to that scenario of the driver having to choose to speed, for example?

So that's where the methodology comes in. And what we do is really for the industry, by the industry is we understand that through our network of our stakeholders, the members we serve, they are the experts. They're the drivers, the safety professionals, the driver trainers, the dispatchers. All of those folks can come, if we can bring them to the table and really use their expertise, their experience, and their knowledge to ask those questions why.

And they come to us with the lens of an industry perspective. And we had a variety of individuals. It's a bipartite approach, meaning we use labor and management so that it's inclusive and we really discuss what are all these factors that could be leading to incidents in the yard.

And what we end up doing is a process where we use a fishbone. So that gives us the visual map of being able to identify it. And we have a room at our head office at Voyager Court that we've painted in white wall marker, and that allows us to visually draw it out. So then everyone that's in the room who is seeing the fishbone can be able to visualize and see the branches that come off of that why, the primary factor, secondary, tertiary, and as we go down to identify the root. And therefore, it's a visual, it's quite impressive when you see it on the wall. It gives us this picture. And then we take that information and we put it all into a fancy PowerPoint that addresses all the spelling issues and the marker and all that kind of stuff.

So the goal is that helps us map it out. And then from there, we get those individuals, the same individuals, the industry representatives, to then help vote and prioritize based on the most important, the highest risk, the most important, to allow us to take, because it could be 40, 50 primary contributing factors and shape those a little bit more to give us a roadmap to focus on what we like to call the top 10.

We know that we can't fix everything and we can't fix everything all at once, so this process allows us to really understand what are the top, top issues we should be looking at? What are the major contributing factors? And the industry knowledge guides us that way.

And then our role at IHSA is to help communicate those results out so that when we're talking to carriers and operators and fleets and through the Fleet Safety Council network is we're saying, "This is what the findings, this is what we gathered, this is what we heard from the industry. And we really feel like we should do initiatives and prevention strategies and advocate for change in these areas because they will have the largest impact." That's the goal.

Ken Rayner:

Yeah. Michelle, you've done a fantastic job at describing the workshop. It's a shame because we're on a podcast here, to be able to, if we could show the diagram, because that fishbone diagram you talked about being on the wall must be 10 feet wide by 6 feet high and must have 1,000, if not more, root causes where you... And then in certain areas of the diagram, you were going down five or six deep with the why. So asking, "Well, why did that occur? And if that occurred, well, why did that occur?" And why, why, why, why, until you really get down to the root cause, as you talked about. So it's a very impressive workshop to see take place or to see the results of it, so congratulations on that.

What were some of those contributing factors that you found that were contributing factors to the yard, the hazards that were occurring in the yard?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah. And firstly, to address your point about the visual. So like you said, we're listening. We will make sure in the link to this podcast take you directly back to the yard safety resources where you can see the visual of the fishbone that's been... The pictures itself, but then how it gets all cleaned up so people can connect the dots there. But essentially-

Ken Rayner:

Oh, there you go.

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah. So we take that as part of the homework for IHSA to finesse it all. But the top-10 list, and it's interesting, part of the process is when we do the voting, so I think there was over 45 different contributing factors that we got everybody to vote on, and they helped to rank and prioritize them. The goal is a top 10 list. We actually ended up with a bunch of ties, so the list itself has more than 10 in it. And we do have a one-pager, kind of what we're calling an infographic that summarizes it.

And I'll just list off a few of them for you because the list is quite extensive. But things like poor lighting, lack of training for the operators and/or people around those in the yard, the brakes and vehicle maintenance, the maintenance with regards to whether it's a shunt vehicle, that came up a lot. The lack or the unclear standards, rules, procedures in a yard. I think we talked about on the road is very heavily regulated, but in the yard there's a lot of different factors and maybe not as well-established safety protocols.

Some of the factors that came up too was impairment, which could be the impairment of the operators, those working around them, health concerns, congestion in the yard, so poor traffic management in the yard could be contributing to those, distractions by all workers, including the driver or the operator.

And one of the elements of the root cause workshop is to not only hear about the contributing factors, but we talk a lot about, "Okay, so what can we do to fix this? And what are the solutions?" And are we hearing any reoccurring and repeating trends that the industries keep saying, "Well, this happened because of x, y, and z." Or, "If we fixed this element, it would make a long-term impact."

And then that's where we lead to the second part of the workshop is getting the industry members to help us identify what we call are the systemic weaknesses, the things that fundamentally have to change. Now, they may take long-term change, but if we were able to fix those systemic areas, we could turn that into a positive, maybe those opportunities that would have lasting and hopefully very significant impact.

So out of those top 10, the reoccurring themes, we identify them as five. So establishing yard safety protocols, so that was a big factor. Being able to classify the truck driver or the operator as either a skilled trade. So it's a voluntary trade right now, and the industry recognizes that that's a big gap. That there's still gaps that exist in the mandatory entry-level training, which is now called entry level training for the class A drivers. And it doesn't necessarily include all of the hazards related in a yard. So that was a gap that we need to potentially fix.

The industry also said that it's not a level playing field when it comes to enforcement because of non-compliant carriers and people not following the rules that do exist. And then the fifth one is one of the fundamental issues is the poor mental health or the lack of availability of mental health resources for not only drivers, but for those who support drivers and operators and dispatchers, et cetera. So that came out of that process, the five themes, and that's really where we want to expand more of our energy on those.

Ken Rayner:

Can we expand a little bit more on each of them right now? Because I've made note of them, so if I asked you about each one of those five, could you just dig a little bit deeper into each one? So maybe we could start, you talked about establishing yard safety protocols. What does that entail?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, and I think, as I mentioned, because there's so many rules that exist on the road, it's very heavy regulated if you're operating the vehicle on a public road, doesn't necessarily exist the same way in the yard. And therefore, if there's lack of enforcement, what can employers, carriers, and operators do to set best practices and procedures? And there is a lot of inconsistency, and that's what we kept hearing from the industry, so to establish some new yard safety protocols.

And then making sure that it's addressing those items that came up in the top-10 contributing factors, like we mentioned, like the lighting requirements or establishing minimum standards for the shunt driver themselves because they don't have the same qualifications requirements as someone who's on the road. And then being able to advocate for greater enforcement with all of the different enforcement bodies that are involved when it comes to the yard safety.

Ken Rayner:

Okay. And then you talked about the truck drivers themselves and looking to perhaps have them classified as a skilled trade. And I appreciate that that, again, you said some of these things are very long-term goals. How would that help affect change?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, and this is a fundamental one that keeps coming up in many elements when we talk about safety that involves a transport operator, large commercial vehicle operator. And right now in the province of Ontario, there's mandatory entry-level training for class-A licensing only. So there's an entry-level training requirement, but again, it's not deemed a compulsory trade. So it doesn't have the same level of oversight that some trades in Ontario have. And without that, that creates some gaps and loopholes and people to maybe cut corners and not invest as much in the training. And there's no oversight, like anybody from Skilled Trades Ontario going out to monitor to make sure that all the requirements are in place.

So that's a big thing that the industry is advocating for is how do we elevate the status, the qualifications, the recognition, the competencies of operators, like in class A, and also make sure we're expanding that to other class of licenses as well? We think this would have a humongous impact, not just on yard safety, but in all of road safety, in particular, sharing the road, the public roads as well, is we can raise the standards, qualifications, training, and competencies. And then the oversight enforcement piece, we think that that would definitely have positive impacts overall across the province.

And then when you designate a trade and you'll hear the term Red Seal, that means it's recognized at a national level. And as you can appreciate, many of the drivers, carriers, and operators offer inter-provincial services. They go across Canada as they're moving goods. So then that would level the

standard, the training requirements right across Canada from province to province, and we think that would have a great impact overall.

Ken Rayner:

That makes a lot of sense. Okay, so you talked about gaps and you talked about training. And it sounded like the mandatory entry-level training that the Ministry of Transportation introduced here five or six years ago in Ontario, that it was a new program and anything else we introduce as new, there's going to be some gaps that are seen once it's implemented and it's starting to be used practically. So I think there's been some gaps perhaps that are identified in that training that need to be closed. What are some of those gaps again, Michelle?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, and the industry had identified that as the entry-level training or MELT [mandatory entry-level training] truck training standard doesn't focus... They do have an in-yard component, but it's not necessarily as heavily as it is on the road piece. So how do we bolster that up so that it really does address some of these unique hazards that exist in the yard?

Also expanding it, like we had mentioned to other classification of drivers, including a standard may be required for the shunt driver who's moving vehicles around in the yard only and making sure... One of the conversations that kept coming up was considering a concept like graduated licensing. So as you can appreciate, as a new or young driver, I know you've got younger children who are probably going through that system or in the phases of it, it's graduated based on as they get more experience and they get more skill and/or more training, they can graduate to higher privileges of what they can do with their vehicle. And that's one of the pieces that was identified too, is can we not implement something similar for truck training?

So I think the easiest way to explain or visualize that is you think of the highest hazard maybe vehicle that's on the road might be like a fuel tanker, someone hauling dangerous goods or explosives. Is like being able to start at the basics entry level into the truck training, and then you would work yourself through training, experience, competencies before you could get to maybe the top skilled required driving and tier it, no different than a beginner driver's ed program. And we think that would then allow the industry to build up skills, would allow you to graduate from task to a different vehicle configuration.

Now, there are some rules for different vehicle configurations that exist today, but essentially there's nothing really stopping me from going out, a newly licensed driver and getting into a very sophisticated vehicle, long, heavy. We know that they carry a lot of goods, they travel at higher speeds, there's a lot of physics behind it. I might not be that experienced. And being able to raise that system so that you can grow into maybe some of more of those challenging situations.

Ken Rayner:

Okay, so the first three you've talked about, you've convinced me of them. So if I'm the minister of transportation, I'm saying, "Let's go, Michelle, let's move forward on these."

We also talked about non-compliant carriers, so carriers that are not compliant with the *Highway Traffic Act* or the CVOR [Commercial Vehicle Operator's Registration] and greater enforcement on them. How would that help?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, so you'll hear things like, because if you're in the industry right now, you'll hear a lot of the Driver's Inc. model. It's a model that exists. It's an alternative model, instead of someone being a full-time employee at a carrier. The problem that has arose and that's currently being tackled is that it's been a model that's been abused and it's been used, not in all cases, I don't want to sound like that, but it's been abused and it has skirted some of the responsibility and the ownership of safety. WSIB coverage has been avoided. Some of the safety components have been transferred from what would be a true employer down to an owner-operator. And therefore, they may not invest the same training.

I'll use an example, owner-operator versus a full-time employee. A full-time employee goes the company's orientation, goes through all the training. There's a mentorship program, there's all of these supports. An owner-operator is the expectation from the Driver Inc., you come in, you're trained, you're prepared, away you go. And there's a gap there. And it unfortunately has been abused, the system. There's a lot of focus right now in the industry to tackle that. And with it, from a safety perspective was, was there a lot of safety training and elements that were missed by abusing that model?

So if we can get greater enforcement of that, greater enforcement of non-compliant carriers, there are tools that exist today for us to flag higher risk based on driver behaviour. How do we level the playing field so that we're those great carriers who are doing things right and we're focusing effort on those that are struggling and potentially putting other road users at risk?

Ken Rayner:

And the last one, Michelle, you mentioned was promoting mental health and wellness, so positive mental health and wellness. Now, that's important in all industries that we support. Why is it so important in the transportation industry?

Michelle Roberts:

Well, I think a couple things. So this is a growing profile for IHSA and our membership is trying to re-establish solutions, raise awareness. But there is a huge stigma and a barrier to access for resources and care. And typically, in the transportation sector, the stats show that is a male dominated industry. So there's additional barriers that come to asking for help or being okay to say it's not okay, and we're trying to remove that barrier.

But you think of the role of an operator or driver and their unique schedules. They could be long haul drivers on the road, away from their families. They work odd hours that don't necessarily afford them the chance to get to medical appointments in the normal traditional hours. It's a constantly changing environment. And we just saw through the pandemic commercial vehicle operators not only being deemed essential, but we weren't getting all of our supplies, our food, our toilet paper, the PPE [personal protective equipment] requirements, unless it was being delivered by a trailer or an operator. And they were exposed to some extreme conditions, they were still working, many of them, in isolation.

And all those factors really raised a little bit of the profile, but there's also stats that show the lifestyle of a driver or an operator, with the irregular sleep patterns, maybe not the best healthy meal options, we know there's some barriers with regards to rest stops, being away from home, feeling isolated, all of those elements can impact not only physical health, but the mental health. And it's a stressful work environment.

So we know that we need to focus more efforts. We need to create some more resources and tools that will resonate with the industry, and so that they can see themselves in those solutions as well. So something we're doing, we're advocating for, we've hired a mental health and wellness specialist, Kathy Martin, who is featured on several other IHSA podcast episodes, and we're looking to continue engage with that sector specific lens so that we can provide more resources.

Ken Rayner:

So I think, I don't know if I've done it before, but I just want to say a big thank you to the transportation industry for everything they did during that pandemic and they continue to do, because what you just talked about and what they went through in those three years really allowed us to continue, society to continue to function. So appreciating that we need to assist them to help with some positive mental health as well.

So some great direction. I love those five. Again, if I had the power, I'd say let's get those all, get those five fixed. That seems like a great initiative to move forward with on all five of them, Michelle. And I know there was some practical tips and controls that came out of the workshops as well that carriers can consider to prevent some of those yard related incidents. Did you want to go over some of those?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, yeah. I can high-level those pretty quickly. And really, as we talk about controls in the workplace and what can we do differently to prevent yard incidents, we really do need to do a thorough risk assessment. The environment is unique in what we're in, and engage your workplace parties to help find solutions.

But some of the things that we heard that we really want to raise attention to is yard layout and thinking big picture. How can we manage the flow of traffic? Making sure there's things in place like speed control, designated areas that potentially could separate pedestrians or other workers on foot from the moving vehicles themselves. So you can put in physical barriers, designated areas. Increased lighting, we heard that that was a big hazard, that it's very difficult to see in some of these yards in the conditions. So yard layout is an important, traffic flow, all of that.

The vehicles themselves, we heard not only from maintenance, but maybe some new technology or elements to it that could be considered. Extra mirrors, you've got sensors around the vehicles, backup alarms, motion detection, as well as indication when vehicles are reversing. That's a big thing, so other people around are aware that the vehicle's reversing.

Internally, workplace practices, policies, procedures, making sure not only do they exist, but that they are being enforced, so people aren't breaking the rules. And if something is happening, it's being

addressed. So, often, we heard, "Well, yeah, there's posted speed limits, but everybody's still whipping through the warehouse yard and everything else."

Looking at practices, if and when, when vehicles need to reverse, is there a spotter available? And what are the safe practices to protect that spotter?

Training and communication came up. So that was another one is let's talk just as much about yard safety as we do road safety. Let's do safety talks and safety meetings and refresh people on the hazards. And being able to encourage best practices with the operators, like the situation changes, the environment changes, is not to be complacent. Maybe step out of their vehicle, do that walk around, understand before they throw the vehicle back in reverse. So just reinforcing some of those through communication to remind everybody.

And another piece that came up was the whole supervision piece, enforcement. How do we get everyone involved at the different levels, the different work relationships, whether you're dealing with contractors or subcontractors or temporary or visitors? Let's treat everybody equal and invest in them with safety messaging and reminders and making sure that there's really clear communication.

And then I think the most impactful thing that carriers, operators, warehouse distribution can do to try to tackle this is to start having conversations with workers. Respond to near misses and potentially those close calls. That is an early indicator that something could happen. There was just a little, maybe a split chance that, oh, wow, it wasn't a major thing, but really learn from those close calls and near misses. Use your health and safety reps, your drivers, your groups, and say, "Oh, man, this is what we almost had. What could we do to prevent it?" So that you're learning from it and being able to maybe implement new controls or refresh training so that it doesn't turn into something more catastrophic.

So I would say those are some practical tips that we can share right away. Remind carriers, operators, safety professionals that they should be considering as they put their lens on the yard.

Ken Rayner:

Excellent. Fantastic, Michelle. So you've shared a lot of tips on this podcast. I know you and your team strive to always add new resources to the IHSA website. So are there some resources that you would encourage our listeners to go to on our website to learn more about some of the things that you've talked about today?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, absolutely. So all of the results from the yards safety workshop itself, like we talked about who was involved, the fishbone diagram, the contributing factors, we have a technical report that summarizes it.

And then most importantly, there was a whole laundry list of practical solutions that the industry had suggested. All of those reports from the root cause workshop are on the website. You can find that, along with resources, policies, procedures, safety talks, webinars, templates, tools, all of that on ihsa.ca/roadsafety. And then you want to find the specific topic for yard safety.

So we've kind of grouped it and categorized it, so it makes it a lot more easier to navigate. So if you're looking for specific toolkits on yard safety, just search down, visit ihsa.ca/roadsafety, and then keyword search yard safety. And what we're trying to do there is put everything that's relevant to the topic, so we will be adding more as we go along. And we think those resources are great not only for safety professionals, but operators, drivers, dispatchers. There's a lot there that would resonate with the different parties that oversee yard safety.

Ken Rayner:

Well, Michelle, it's always great having you on the podcast. You share so much valuable information and you're such a wealth of knowledge. Thank you so much for being on our podcast again. And thank you to the listeners for listening to this podcast on health and safety concerns in truck yards. Be sure to subscribe and “like” us on your podcast channel and visit us on ihsa.ca for a wealth of health and safety resources and information,

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