

News Release

For Immediate Release
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MANDATORY TRAINING FOR DRILL RIG OPERATORS WILL SAVE LIVES

OAKVILLE — Mike Gallagher, business manager of Local 793 of the International Union of Operating Engineers, says construction sites will be safer now that the province has introduced regulations to ensure that operators of rotary foundation drill rigs are properly trained and licensed.

“Mandatory training of rotary drill rig operators will provide better protection for both the operators of the equipment and also for the workers on construction sites in Ontario,” he said. “These drill rigs are massive pieces of heavy equipment and the changes will ensure that workers must have adequate knowledge, proficiency and proper training when operating such a rig.”

Gallagher noted the union has been fighting for mandatory training since Local 793 apprentice Kyle Knox lost his life when a drill rig collapsed at a subway construction site at York University in Toronto on Oct. 11, 2011. Twenty-four-year-old Knox was killed when the drill rig toppled onto the backhoe he was operating. Another Local 793 member, Dan DeLuca, was also injured in the accident.

An investigation determined that major factors in the tipping of the drill rig were inadequate site preparation, a soil base unable to withstand the weight and pressure created by the drill rig combined with a procedure of digging dispersal holes filled with wet material, and the fact the drill rig was operating on a slope greater than allowed within safe parameters.

In an effort to convince authorities that regulator changes were needed, the union produced a video that showed how drill rigs are similar to mobile cranes, and why operators need to be licensed.

“I am pleased to see that the government has listened and made the necessary changes to regulations,” said Gallagher. “Rotary foundation drill rig operators on project sites will now have to provide written proof of training when requested to do so by a Ministry of Labour inspector.”

Gallagher applauded Labour Minister Kevin Flynn and industry partners like Deep Foundations for supporting the regulatory changes.

“After the fatality involving Kyle Knox, I was determined that the standards for drill rig operators be raised,” said Gallagher. “The government has done the right thing by introducing these regulations and Ontario now leads the country. These measures will undoubtedly prevent future fatalities.”

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Local 793 president Joe Redshaw, who is labour chair of the hoisting committee of the Infrastructure Health and Safety Association of Ontario, said strengthening the regulations for operators of rotary drill rigs is a step forward for safety and the regulations will make Ontario a leader in drill rig operator training.

“These new regulations will ensure that only licensed, fully-trained operators are permitted to operate rotary drill rigs. Construction sites in Ontario will be much safer as a result of these regulations.”

Local 793 of the International Union of Operating Engineers represents thousands of highly-skilled crane and heavy equipment operators across Ontario. The union has a head office, banquet hall and training campus in Oakville, and another training campus in Morrisburg.

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