

New eCourse Funded to Apply Criminal Law in Workplace Injury and Death

National training initiative equips police, prosecutors, and regulators to assess criminal liability in serious workplace injury and fatality cases.

CALGARY, ALBERTA, CANADA, May 9, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [John Petropoulos Memorial Fund](#) (JPMF) is pleased to announce the upcoming launch

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*Rob Stewart, Consulting
Director JPMF*

of a national eLearning course that will equip law enforcement, Crown prosecutors, and regulatory officials with the tools to evaluate serious workplace incidents through the lens of Canada’s Criminal Code.

This independently developed course focuses on the practical application of legal duties established under section 217.1, which was introduced following the Westray

disaster. These provisions were created by Parliament to ensure that individuals who direct the work of others particularly at the senior leadership and governance level are legally accountable for taking reasonable steps to prevent bodily harm in the workplace.

The initiative was made possible through an unrestricted funding contribution from the United Steelworkers (USW) Canada, who have long advocated for safer working conditions and greater enforcement of existing laws. Course development and content were led independently by subject-matter experts in policing, criminal law, organizational systems, and workplace safety. Further, it builds upon the national awareness training launched by the Government of Canada in November 2020, which has already contributed to a measurable rise in criminal investigations and convictions.

“This course supports the fair and consistent enforcement of laws already on the books,” said Rob Stewart, Consulting Director of JPMF. “It provides investigators and prosecutors with a better understanding of how complex decisions, systems, and leadership behaviours may cross the threshold into criminal liability when serious harm occurs.”

A Legal Duty, Not a Regulatory Suggestion

The training focuses on equipping participants to assess whether systemic workplace failures including breakdowns in supervision, planning, oversight, or culture could meet the threshold for criminal negligence under Canadian law. It includes interdisciplinary approaches grounded in

sociotechnical theory, social psychology, and relevant Canadian case law.

While the course provides legal and investigative tools, it reinforces the foundational principle that Crown prosecutors and police remain independent decision-makers, applying evidence and law on a case-by-case basis.

Message to Senior Organizational Leaders

Parliament's post-Westray amendments to the Criminal Code marked a clear shift: workplace safety is no longer solely the domain of regulatory compliance it is a matter of criminal responsibility. Under section 217.1, those in positions of authority who direct the work of others have a positive legal obligation to prevent bodily harm. When this duty is ignored, and serious injury or death occurs, leaders may face criminal charges, including criminal negligence causing death or manslaughter.

This course empowers investigators to trace decision-making and systemic conditions within organizations potentially reaching all the way to the boardroom as a party to the offence. Executives and directors are encouraged to re-examine their governance, due diligence practices, and internal accountability systems to ensure they meet evolving legal expectations.

Course Objectives:

- Support high-quality investigations of workplace fatalities and serious incidents.
- Provide legal clarity on Criminal Code provisions, including section 217.1.
- Enhance investigative and prosecutorial capacity regarding systemic organizational failures.
- Promote consistent and independent application of Canadian criminal law.

The eLearning course will be delivered to agencies across Canada later this year and is part of a broader commitment to ensuring that workplace tragedies are met with credible, informed, and just legal responses.

About the John Petropoulos Memorial Fund (JPMF)

The John Petropoulos Memorial Fund works to prevent workplace injuries and fatalities by promoting leadership accountability, system-level prevention, and public education. The Fund honours the legacy of Constable John Petropoulos, who died in the line of duty due to a preventable workplace hazard. His legacy continues to shape our commitment to safer, more accountable workplaces.

Robert Stewart

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