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PORT COLBORNE — Keeping workplaces safe not only improves productivity and reduces absenteeism, it also decreases employer benefit costs.

That's one of many messages Safe Communities wanted to get across to employers yesterday morning when a workplace health and safety open house was held at the Port Colborne Fire and Emergency Services headquarters.

With more than 900 businesses and workplaces in Port Colborne, Lori Kleinsmith, co-ordinator of Port Colborne Safe Communities said she wants to form a community network to share information, resources and give employers an outlet to learn about programs and training that can be utilized to minimize injuries and other work-related incidents.

Everything from preventing injuries, falls, mental health issues and violence in the workplace can be prevented or reduced through workplace training, said Kleinsmith.

“Training is expensive so we're trying to determine needs and bring training here to help them save.”

Through the Safe Communities Incentive Program, undergoing training benefits the small to medium businesses because when the program is complete, employers get a 5% reduction on their Workplace Safety and Insurance Board premiums.

“Overall there is something in it for everybody.”

A healthy workplace can reduce absenteeism, improve productivity, lower turn over rates, decrease benefit costs, reduce work and life stresses and reduce chronic diseases.

For youths, the passport to safety can help increase awareness of workplace safety for young workers aged 15 to 24.

Kleinsmith hopes the new Safe Communities website <http://portcolborne.safecommunities.ca> will soon have a link where employers can network through the website and share ideas, information and training to help achieve Safe Communities Port Colborne's mandate to make the city a safe place to live, learn, work and play.