

## Forensic expertise enhances investigations

### Investigations officer's background helps uncover evidence

Investigations officers are like detectives, trying to put together pieces of a puzzle when it comes to looking at workplace injuries or fatalities.

Investigations officer **Colin Harris** focuses on those cases through a unique lens.

### A background made for investigations

A former Auxiliary RCMP constable, coroner, and advanced practice forensic nurse, Colin works in the [Fatal and Serious Injury Investigations unit](#).

He's also a board certified medicolegal death investigator by the [American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators](#) — the only Canadian to hold the designation—and an instructor of forensic nursing at BCIT.

His background in forensics and medicine allows him to help the unit uncover crucial pieces of evidence, pieces that may have been overlooked in the past.

### Taking it to another level

Just as in criminal investigations, occupational investigations call for all available evidence to be identified, preserved, and collected from the get-go. Nothing can be missed or ignored, even if it doesn't seem relevant initially.

"There are a lot of things that bodily injuries can tell us, just like any other piece of evidence," Colin says. "There are all these different experts that come together for an investigation: engineers, legal experts, social workers, critical incident workers, experts from various industries—but in the past no one from the forensic medical side was involved."



*Colin Harris uses his forensics background to help prevent injuries and keep workers safe.*

“But now WorkSafeBC is taking our investigations to another level by incorporating this expertise and establishing new best practices for occupational accident investigations.”

### **A new way to prevent injuries**

Colin can also help other investigators interpret autopsy and toxicology reports, understand medical terminology, and identify injury patterns, which can not only help with investigations themselves but can lead to injury prevention down the road, Colin explains.

“This can help us understand what happened, especially in unwitnessed incidents where the body can tell you things you might not have otherwise known: where the person was, what they were doing, what they were impacted by,” he says. “If you can figure out what happened, you can try and find out how to prevent it from happening again”

**Jeff Dolan**, director of Investigations Services, says Colin’s forensic clinical observations add a crucial element to the unit’s work.

“The skill set he brings allows us to ask questions that perhaps we weren’t able to answer before without using external resources,” Jeff says. “It’s in our best interests to cover every possible angle of an investigation, and Colin provides a new angle for examining evidence.”

### **Learn more**

Read about occupational injury and fatality investigations in Colin’s article in [The Journal of Forensic Nursing](#).