

# Elements of an occupational health and safety program



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## Please note

This publication contains general information about preparing an occupational health and safety program. Please consult [The Saskatchewan Employment Act](#) and [The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020](#) for complete details and for the purpose of interpreting and applying the law.

### **A note about terms**

'Act,' refers to *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*.

'Regulations,' refers to *The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020*.

'Committee,' refers to an occupational health committee required by the Act and the Regulations.

'Incident,' refers to a situation that could cause/caused an injury, occupational illness or fatality.

## Introduction

An occupational health and safety program is a definite plan of action designed for each specific workplace. It sets out the requirements and procedures to prevent incidents — situations that could cause or caused fatalities, injuries and occupational illnesses.

An occupational health and safety program is an important health and safety tool that has been proven to reduce incidents in the workplace.

Part III of *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* requires employers in moderate to high hazard workplaces to establish and maintain an occupational health and safety program in accordance with *The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020*.

The Act and the Regulations set out the minimum requirements on a wide variety of health and safety issues.

To effectively prevent incidents, a workplace's occupational health and safety program may need to exceed the legislated requirements.

## Which workplaces must have a program?

Every employer would benefit from implementing an effective occupational health and safety program.

## What criteria must the program meet?

1. The Act and the Regulations set out minimum requirements reflecting accepted practices. However, every workplace is different, and the best way to prevent incidents may differ from one workplace to another. That is why the health and safety program needs to be workplace-specific. A program developed for one workplace may not meet the needs of another.
2. To be effective, an occupational health and safety program needs the active support and commitment of senior management to ensure the program is carried out with no exceptions. Doing the job safely must be as important as doing it efficiently and effectively.
3. The occupational health and safety program needs worker involvement. It must be developed in consultation with your occupational health committee. Employee involvement in health and safety activities will make your occupational health and safety program more effective.
4. Everyone must be held accountable for carrying out his or her responsibilities and for making the health and safety program succeed. Senior management must be accountable for developing and implementing the program. Individual supervisors and employees should be assigned responsibility for carrying out specific elements of the program. The health and safety program should then be reviewed in the same way as any other important program in the organization.
5. Each of the program's elements must be in writing. Elements must be supported with all documents and information addressing matters listed in the Regulations. If elements of the health and safety

The Act and the Regulations require employers in moderate to high-hazard industries with 10 or more workers to implement a program. See the appendix of this publication for a list of affected workplaces.

program have been implemented in separate procedures and policies, then those procedures and policies must be referred to in the main health and safety program document.

6. The program must be effectively communicated to all employees. It must be available to your occupational health committee, workers, and to an occupational health officer (on request).
7. Setting up a program is not simply about producing documents. A health and safety program is a 'living system' that should be constantly adapted, evaluated, and improved to make the workplace healthier and safer. Effective implementation and monitoring is crucial to its success.
8. If you have contracted two or more employers<sup>1</sup> to do work at your place of employment, you are responsible for coordinating their health and safety programs and ensuring the programs meet all the criteria.
9. In short, to be effective, your program must:
  - be workplace-specific;
  - have commitment from the employer and senior management;
  - have input from the workers;
  - assign clear responsibilities and accountabilities;
  - have an evaluation mechanism; and
  - be available and effectively communicated to staff.

<sup>1</sup> *The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020, Section 33-4(c)*

## What steps should be taken to implement your program?

1. Write a policy that demonstrates your commitment.
2. Have adequate systems to identify and control hazards.
3. Identify which people, resources and procedures are needed to deal with emergencies.
4. Prepare a statement of responsibilities for health and safety (who is responsible for what).
5. Complete planned and unplanned inspections.
6. Develop plans to control chemical and biological hazards.
7. Develop training plans for workers and supervisors.
8. Develop a procedure to investigate incidents, dangerous occurrences (near misses) and refusals to work.
9. Develop ways to involve workers in the program.
10. Regularly evaluate and revise your program.

### Return-to-work plans

While it is not required by OHS legislation, you should have a plan to return injured workers to productive jobs within the workplace.



## Write a policy that demonstrates commitment

Regulation 3-11(1)(a) requires... *a statement of the employer's policy with respect to the protection and maintenance of the health and safety of the workers.*

An occupational health and safety policy is a statement of principles and general guidelines that govern your health and safety actions. It tells workers, suppliers, subcontractors, self-employed people and clients about the organization's commitment to health and safety. It should include:

- the health and safety philosophy of the organization;
- management's commitment to prevent incidents;
- the objectives of the health and safety program;
- who is responsible and accountable for elements of the program;
- the responsibility of employees and others for health and safety; and
- a statement that sub-standard health and safety performance will not be tolerated.

The policy statement must be made known to all employees and, where appropriate, to suppliers, contracted employers, self-employed people and clients. New hires must be made aware of the policy statement during orientation. The policy should not take a back seat to any other policy in your organization. It must be kept up-to-date and it must be followed in all work activities. The most senior manager in the organization should sign it.

### Musts

#### Is your policy statement:

- Written, communicated and posted?
- Understood by workers and others who may be affected?
- Clear about who is responsible and accountable?
- Followed in all work activities and areas?

## Identify and control hazards and emergencies

Regulation 3-11(1)(b) requires... *the identification of existing and potential risks to the health or safety of workers at the place of employment and the measures, including procedures to respond to an emergency, that will be taken to reduce, eliminate or control those risks.*

One of the most important elements of an occupational health and safety program is an effective system to identify and control hazards.

A hazard is any source of potential damage, harm or adverse health effects on something or someone.

Hazards may cause incidents. The employer may not be able to anticipate and prevent every incident. However, the employer should take all precautions that a reasonable and prudent person would take in the circumstances.

Remember that many workplace incidents can be attributed to hazards and risks that people in the workplace have come to consider routine or unimportant.

Regulation 3-11(1) requires a system to:

1. Identify known and potential workplace hazards. The system must enable and encourage workers to bring forward concerns about hazards, and
2. Implement measures to eliminate or control the hazards.

**Note:** Assessing the risks associated with each hazard will help determine what needs to be fixed first. Begin with the hazards that have the highest chance of causing an incident.

Risks include:

- Safety hazards
- Health hazards such as:
  - chemical, biological and physical agents;
  - work design (ergonomic hazards); and
  - stressors such as harassment, violence, shift work and working alone or at isolated worksites.

### Musts

- Is your risk management system proactive? Does it anticipate risks?
- Does your system specify how to do jobs and tasks safely? For example have you used a job safety analysis process?
- Have safe work procedures been developed?
- Does your system include a mechanism to inform workers about hazards, their risks, and hazard controls?
- Does your system assign responsibilities for each element in the program to specific people?
- Does your system include plans, policies, procedures and programs required by the regulations?
- Does your system include plans for identifying and dealing with emergencies?

A hazard identification and control system can be incorporated into operational procedures. Responsibility must be assigned to specific employees to ensure accountability. Knowledgeable supervisors, in consultation with experienced workers, are good candidates for leading hazard identification, assessment and control efforts.

Workers are a valuable source of information about hazards and risks in the workplace. The occupational health committee should provide input and advice, and audit the system's effectiveness.

### **What process must be used to review hazards?**

1. Consider these factors and items when reviewing workplace hazards:
  - information from workers, past near-misses and incidents;
  - incidents in similar workplaces;
  - Workers' Compensation Board claims;
  - workers' health and safety concerns;
  - occupational health committee minutes;
  - new or modified jobs;
  - new equipment or work processes;
  - the possibility of exposure to hazardous substances and agents;
  - product literature and information from suppliers; and
  - new scientific information about risk of illness from exposure to substances at work.
2. Consider the hazards associated with tasks, equipment and materials. Conduct a job safety analysis (or a similar assessment) for all hazardous jobs.
3. Require and encourage workers to promptly report health and safety concerns. This is a proactive way of preventing incidents. You should have a system in place that:
  - requires and encourages workers to report concerns to supervisors;
  - protects workers from reprisals if they do raise concerns;
  - requires supervisors to ensure workers do report concerns; and
  - requires supervisors to promptly correct concerns and document what was done.
4. You can also conduct informal interviews with workers to get information on near misses and incidents that affect them, or that they witnessed or heard about.

For more information, refer to the CSA Group standard CAN/CSA-Z1002-12 (R2017): *Occupational health and safety – Hazard identification and elimination and risk assessment and control*.

## What process must be used to assess the risk?

The next step is to determine the nature of the risk associated with each hazard. Find out:

1. Is there a risk of permanent disabling injury?
2. Is there a risk of temporary disabling injury?
3. Is there a risk of minor disabling injury?

Then estimate the level of risk:

- How often and for how long are workers exposed to each hazard?
- How common are workplace incidents associated with each hazard?

Hazards with a risk of serious injury and hazards to which workers are exposed frequently, or for long periods of time, are your top priority for control.

## How must hazards be controlled?

How you control a hazard will depend on the circumstances. You must consider the seriousness of the risk and what controls are reasonable and practical in the circumstances (in the Act, this is called *reasonably practicable*).<sup>2</sup> The legislation provides the minimum standards to be met. You should also consider best practices recommended by your industry.

Hazard control should follow three steps:

1. Eliminate hazards posed by equipment, materials or work processes at the source. You may redesign the work process, substitute a safer chemical for a hazardous chemical, or buy new equipment. These methods are often the best ways of controlling hazards.
2. If it is not reasonable and practical to eliminate hazards, use engineering or other controls. Machine guards and noise enclosures are examples.
3. If it is still not reasonable and practical to reduce the risks through these methods, protect the workers through personal protective equipment, training, safe operating procedures, supervision and so forth.

The person(s) responsible for risk assessment and control should be prepared to explain to workers, management and an occupational health officer the extent of the risk associated with a hazard and the effectiveness of the chosen control(s).

<sup>2</sup>The Act defines “**Practicable**” as possible given current knowledge, technology and invention.

The Act defines “**Reasonably practicable**” as practicable unless the person on whom a duty is placed can show that there is a gross disproportion between the benefit of the duty and the cost, in time, trouble and money, of the measures to secure the duty.

## How should information be communicated to workers?

If any of this is going to prevent incidents, workers have to understand the risks of the job and how those risks are to be controlled. Methods of communicating information about hazards include:

1. Making sure anyone at risk, or anyone responsible for ensuring the safety of others, understands the risks and how they can be controlled.
2. Implementing safe work procedures and making compliance a condition of employment.
3. Making supervisors responsible and accountable for ensuring that workers understand and use safe work procedures.
4. Educating workers on the risks, the use of hazard controls and safe work procedures. Start health and safety education right away, by providing orientation training to new workers and workers transferred to new jobs. Make sure workers receive additional training when new equipment or procedures are implemented and when there is inadequate safety performance.
5. Requiring contracted employers and self-employed people to implement safe work procedures and educate their workers.

It is more effective to fully integrate health and safety into normal work procedures than it is to have one procedure for safety and another for production or customer/client service.

## What emergencies must procedures address?

You must have procedures to address predictable emergencies, such as fires, pipeline breaks, safety device failures, leaks and releases of hazardous agents. Start by making a list of possible emergencies.

1. Decide how to respond to each type of emergency. Will you declare an emergency, evacuate workers, call in internal and external resources, rescue workers and tend to casualties?
2. Consider the possible major consequences of each potential emergency.
3. Determine the best rescue, evacuation, decontamination and firefighting response plans for each emergency that could occur at your workplace.
4. Make a list of resources required to respond to each emergency, such as first aid and medical supplies, rescue equipment, emergency response training and so forth.

Then implement the necessary emergency response plans.

## Identify people and resources required to deal with emergencies

Regulation 3-11(1)(c) requires... *the identification of internal and external resources, including personnel and equipment, that may be required to respond to an emergency.*

1. The program must identify who is designated to carry out the emergency plans, state their duties and responsibilities, and identify the training they need to be competent.
2. The program must identify resources. These resources include the personnel and equipment needed to deal with each emergency situation. Consider the location of the place of employment, existing resources and the nature of each emergency.
3. The program must include a fire safety plan. See Regulation 25-2 for more information.
4. The program must include emergency procedures to deal with an accumulation, spill or leak of hazardous chemical or biological substances. See Regulation 21-9 for more information.

### Musts

- Has your program identified human and other resources required to deal with emergencies?
- Has your program developed a written fire safety plan and a plan to deal with chemical spills?
- Has your program identified emergency training requirements?

## Prepare a statement of responsibilities

Regulation 3-11(1)(d) requires... *a statement of the responsibilities of the employer, the supervisors and the workers.*

Employers, supervisors and workers are all legally responsible for health and safety in the workplace. Everyone must be individually accountable for carrying out his or her responsibilities. The greater the authority, the greater the responsibility.

See sections 3-8 to 3-15 of the Act and Regulations 3-1, 3-2 and 3-6 for the general minimum health and safety responsibilities of employers, workers and supervisors at a workplace.

Your occupational health and safety program needs to be specific and clearly spell out individuals' responsibilities for health and safety in your workplace.

A senior manager who is committed to the success of the health and safety program should be made responsible for developing and overseeing implementation of the program. Responsibility (and accountability) for carrying out each program element must also be assigned to specific supervisors or other employees.

The statement should say who is responsible for which actions as specifically as possible. For example, the program should identify who is authorized to order safety equipment, require machine maintenance or mobilize resources to ensure that a task is done safely.

Remember, in order to carry out their responsibilities, people must:

- know what their responsibilities are;
- have the necessary authority to carry them out; and
- have the necessary skills, training and experience to carry them out.

### Musts

- Are assignments as specific as possible, and in writing?
- Are assignments accompanied by a monitoring system (checks)?
- Does the statement of responsibilities state what consequences follow when health and safety duties are not carried out?

## What are the responsibilities of employers and senior managers?

Employers and senior managers' responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- providing a safe and healthy workplace;
- ensuring that legal health and safety requirements are met;
- establishing and maintaining an effective health and safety program and obtaining input from the committee;
- allocating enough resources (money, time, equipment and people, including competent managers and supervisors) to implement the program;
- making sure that managers and supervisors are trained, supported and held accountable for fulfilling their workplace health and safety requirements;
- managing the health and safety performance of their managers and supervisors;
- making sure workers have the information, training, certification, supervision and experience to do their jobs safely;
- making sure medical/first aid facilities are provided as needed;
- setting up effective occupational health committees and ensuring that workers have the means to allow them to participate effectively in health and safety discussions; and
- co-operating with other parties in dealing with health and safety issues.

## What are the responsibilities of managers and supervisors?

Managers' and supervisors' responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- understanding and ensuring compliance with workplace health and safety requirements;
- co-operating with the occupational health committee, helping it to do its job properly, and ensuring all employees support committee members in their health and safety activities;
- making sure hazards are identified and proper steps are taken to control the risks;
- inspecting work areas and correcting unsafe acts and conditions;
- instructing and coaching workers to follow safe work procedures;
- ensuring only authorized, competent workers operate equipment;
- ensuring equipment is properly maintained;
- ensuring the necessary personal protective equipment is provided to workers and used properly;
- knowing how to safely handle, store, produce and dispose of chemical and biological substances at the workplace;
- understanding and implementing emergency procedures;
- reporting and investigating incidents and dangerous occurrences;
- promoting health and safety awareness; and
- co-operating with other parties in dealing with health and safety issues.



## What are the responsibilities of workers?

Workers' responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- understanding and following legislation and workplace health and safety requirements;
- following safe work procedures;
- using the correct safety equipment, machine guards, devices and personal protective equipment in accordance with the Regulations;
- reporting unsafe acts and workplace hazards;
- reporting incidents, dangerous occurrences and occupational illnesses immediately;
- refraining from causing or participating in the harassment of another worker;
- working and acting safely and helping others to work and act safely; and
- co-operating with the occupational health committee and others on health and safety issues

## What is the role of the occupational health committee?

The role of the committee must not be confused with the responsibilities of supervisors or employers. The committee brings together workers' in-depth practical knowledge of specific jobs and managers' knowledge of the organization's 'big picture' to provide input and advice on workplace health and safety matters.

Through its duties, the committee monitors the effectiveness of the occupational health and safety program. When the committee is made aware of, or finds health and safety issues, it advises the employer on how to correct them. The employer is ultimately accountable for the final decision.

## Schedule inspections

Regulation 3-11(1)(e) requires... *a schedule for the regular inspection of the place of employment and of work processes and procedures.*

Inspections are one of the most common and effective tools for identifying and correcting problems before they cause near misses and incidents. Inspections should also be used to draw attention to and encourage good health and safety practices.

There are two types of inspections – informal inspections and formal/planned inspections.

**Informal inspections** – This refers to conscious awareness of health and safety hazards and controls as people do their jobs. Informal inspections are an important part of an effective system of hazard identification and control that should be done by workers, supervisors and managers. Since workers are often the first to see things happen, they should be required and encouraged to report hazards. Two important steps for encouraging this are taking concerns seriously and keeping workers informed about the status of remedial action (when and how the correction will be made, or why the corrective action has been delayed or denied).

**Formal/planned inspections** – A formal inspection is a planned walk through or examination of a workplace, selected work area or particular hazards, machinery, tools, *equipment*<sup>3</sup> and work practices. In any workplace, day-to-day activities create health and safety hazards. People, equipment, materials and the environment constantly change. Some environmental changes remove hazards, while others create new ones. Inspections help focus attention on change and help solve problems before they cause incidents. Formal inspections must include an inspection of work processes and procedures to ensure the adequacy of safe work procedures.

### Musts

- Does your schedule identify what will be inspected (work areas, equipment, tools, procedures, practices and so forth), by whom and how frequently?
- Does it include inspections of work procedures and production processes?
- Does it state what inspection records must be produced to ensure accountability?
- Does it provide for correcting defects found during inspection?
- Does it state what training is required for those who carry out inspections?

This section deals with planned inspections.

Regulation 3-12 requires the employer to arrange for regular examinations of any *plant*<sup>4</sup> under the control of the employer. Regulation 3-17 requires the employer to enable the occupational health committee to inspect the place of employment at reasonable intervals.

Committees can support the health and safety activities of supervisors and workers by finding defects they have become used to. In some cases, committee inspections may also focus on special problems in the workplace.

When an occupational health committee brings a problem or concern to the attention of an employer, the employer is required to resolve the problem or address the concern. If that cannot be done, the employer is required to give the committee a written reason for not resolving the problem or addressing the concern.

The committee should inspect the workplace before each regularly scheduled meeting.

<sup>3</sup>The Act defines "**Equipment**" as any mechanical or non-mechanical article or device, and includes any machine, tool, appliance, apparatus, implement, service or utility, but does not include the personal property owned by an individual, unless that property is used in the carrying on of an occupation.

<sup>4</sup>The Act defines "**Plant**" as any premises, site, land, mine, water, structure, fixture or equipment employed or used in the carrying on of an occupation.

## Who is responsible for what within the inspection schedule?

Per Regulation 3-12, an employer is required to have the place of employment inspected regularly. Regular inspections need to be carried out by someone with specialized training. Sometimes it is best to use experts like service technicians and safety professionals from outside the place of employment. Other times it is best to use your own maintenance personnel, supervisors and workers. As a general rule, the responsibility for each type of inspection should fall on those who are most knowledgeable and for whom it is most practical to do the inspection.

Your occupational health and safety program should assign responsibility for carrying out different types of inspections and set out the frequency and scope of those inspections. Your program must identify what is to be inspected and who will do each inspection.

Make sure anyone given inspection responsibility gets the training they need to fulfil their responsibilities.

## When should inspections be carried out?

Schedule inspections of buildings, work areas (including storage rooms and travel ways), machinery, tools, equipment, production process and work procedures. Inspections need to be done often enough to find problems before they cause near misses and incidents.

Some kinds of inspections need to be more frequent than other inspections.

For example, pre-use equipment checks will be much more frequent than planned general inspections. Depending on the type of inspection, the frequency might be:

- before use;
- when issued;
- when serviced; or
- daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually.

## Develop plans to control chemicals and biohazards

Regulation 3-11(1)(f) requires... *a plan for the control of any biological or chemical substance handled, used, stored, produced or disposed of at the place of employment and, if appropriate, the monitoring of the work environment.*

If you have chemical or biological substances in the workplace, you need to make sure they are properly controlled. Hazard information about biological and chemical substances must be obtained and used to set up adequate controls. Controls should include worker instruction and workplace monitoring. The plan must meet the requirements of Part 21 and 22, and Regulation 6-22.

Employers are required to:

1. Maintain an inventory of chemical and biological substances that may harm workers when handled, used, stored, produced or disposed of at the place of employment.
2. Obtain hazard information on these substances.
3. Reduce workplace contamination and prevent exposure to any extent that could be harmful.
4. Use the information to develop and implement safe work procedures and processes.
5. Use the information to train workers about hazards and how to use required work procedures and processes.
6. Develop and implement emergency procedures for accumulations, spills, or leaks of chemical and biological substances that may be hazardous to workers.

The plan must assign responsibilities to those who order, purchase and receive chemical and biological substances. Those responsible must obtain current, pertinent information about the hazards and ensure that workers are adequately trained and protected. A centralized or structured hazardous product ordering system may help do this.

### Musts

- Have you prepared an inventory of chemicals and biohazards?
- Do you have a control system for safety data sheets (SDS)?
- Are SDSs readily available to employees?
- Are records of employee training kept?
- Are records of environmental monitoring kept, if needed?
- Are records of ventilation system maintenance kept, if needed?
- Is a plan for control of infectious substances kept, where required?

The plan must address:

1. How to prevent the release of hazardous chemical and biological substances in the work environment, and how to minimize the concentrations of hazardous chemical and biological substances in the work environment.
2. How to ensure containment and ventilation systems are properly serviced and maintained.
3. How to ensure the workplace is properly cleaned, and that there are adequate decontamination procedures for workers.
4. How to ensure appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is used, cleaned, stored and maintained properly.
5. How to ensure storage of the chemical or biological substance is adequate.
6. How to ensure emergency response plans are adequate.
7. How to provide any necessary monitoring of the work environment.

Regulation 6-22 requires an exposure control plan for infectious materials or organisms that are a risk to workers or self-employed people in a workplace.

This plan must include:

- a mechanism for identifying workers who may be exposed;
- a way of identifying how workers could be exposed;
- disinfection and other control measures; and
- worker training.

If you have infectious materials or organisms in your workplace, your occupational health and safety program must include an exposure plan.

## When is monitoring required?

Monitoring (air sampling, personal assessment of exposure etc.) measures contaminants in the workplace. Monitoring can help assess risks and determine the appropriate level of hazard control measures that are needed to keep the workers safe. The program should have a monitoring plan when:

1. The work environment may not be safe because:
  - contaminant levels are unknown or have never been measured;
  - contaminant levels fluctuate; or
  - worker exposures may vary, depending upon type and duration of processes.
2. Workers are concerned about their health, have become ill because of exposure to workplace contaminants, or are questioning existing monitoring test results.

Some chemicals and biological substances do not have exposure limits. Measuring these substances will not provide meaningful information when safe exposure levels have not been established.

Monitoring is not required where there is no standard method for obtaining reliable results.

## Develop a training plan for supervisors and workers

Regulation 3-11(1)(g) requires... *a plan for training workers and supervisors in safe work practices and procedures, including any procedures, plans, policies or programs that the employer is required to develop pursuant to the Act or any regulations made pursuant to the Act that apply to the work of the workers and supervisors.*

Workplace health and safety education and training is critical to making your occupational health and safety program work. Develop a training plan that specifically addresses the workers' and supervisors' health and safety needs at your place of employment.

The plan should determine how health and safety training will be developed and delivered, and by whom. It should ensure that health and safety education and training begins with worker orientation on the first day of employment, and when a worker is transferred to a different job. Orientation must cover any topic relevant to the health and safety of the worker, including:

- emergency procedures;
- first aid facilities;
- restricted areas;
- precautions required to protect workers from hazards; and
- any other health and safety procedures, plans, policies and programs that apply to the worker.

Training is also needed when new equipment, processes, or procedures are introduced into the workplace, or when there are instances of unacceptable health and safety performance.

The objective of your training plan is to build health and safety precautions into every job and increase your workers' health and safety knowledge and abilities to the legally required level.

Divide workers' health and safety training into:

- duties and responsibilities; and
- how to do specific work tasks.

### Musts

- Do you keep records of orientation?
- Do you keep records of training required by the regulations (such as training required for forklift operators)?
- Do you keep records of crew talks?
- Are responsibilities for training clearly assigned?
- Are records kept of training provided to the occupational health committee co-chairpersons?



## What is the role of the committee in training?

One of the duties of the occupational health committee is to establish, promote and recommend the means of delivery of workplace health and safety training for the education and information of workers. Consult and cooperate with the committee when you are developing your health and safety program.

## What must worker training include?

**The Act defines “train”** as to give information and explanation to a worker with respect to a particular subject-matter and to require a practical demonstration that the worker has acquired knowledge or skill related to the subject-matter.

Training must cover:

1. Relevant content of the health and safety program. This includes training on safe work practices and procedures in the program.
2. Training on specific matters in the Regulations applying to the worker’s work, such as lifting, WHMIS, use of respiratory protective devices, scaffolds and so forth.
3. Orientation training as required by Regulation 3-8. Orientation training must cover the content of plans, policies, procedures and programs required by the Regulations. Examples include harassment and violence policies, and plans and procedures for handling infectious material.
4. Legislative health and safety requirements that apply to the worker’s job, including the worker’s rights and responsibilities.

## What training must supervisors receive?

Supervisors have an important role to play in preventing workplace incidents and occupational illnesses. They must be trained to fulfil that role. They need all of the instruction given to workers, plus the following training:

1. Applicable sections of the Act and the Regulations.
2. Relevant elements of the occupational health and safety program, including roles, duties and responsibilities.
3. Safe handling, use, storage, production and disposal of chemical and biological substances.
4. The need for personal protective equipment, how to use it safely and its limitations.
5. Emergency procedures.
6. Any other matters necessary to ensure the health and safety of workers under their direction.

Supervisors are often responsible for training their workers. If this is the case, supervisors should have the necessary training and skill to:

- instruct workers;
- prepare a proper plan of instruction; and
- explain why each step in a safe work procedure must be followed.

## Develop a procedure to investigate incidents, dangerous occurrences and refusals to work

Regulation 3-11(1)(h) requires... *a procedure for the investigation of incidents, dangerous occurrences and refusals to work pursuant to section 3-31 of the Act at the place of employment.*

Investigations of incidents and dangerous occurrences (also known as near incidents and near misses) provide valuable information needed to prevent similar incidents in the future.

A proper investigation of each work refusal is crucial to resolving the refusal and correcting the circumstances that caused the refusal in the first place.

### What about investigations of incidents and dangerous occurrences?

There are many reasons why supervisors and managers should investigate incidents and dangerous occurrences. The most important reason is that supervisors and managers are responsible for making sure any problems are corrected.

Sections 3-18 and 3-20 of the Regulations require the employer to ensure the occupational health committee co-chairpersons or their designates investigate as soon as reasonably possible:

1. Incidents that cause the death of a worker.
2. Any accident that requires a worker to be admitted to hospital as an in-patient for 24 hours or more.
3. Dangerous occurrences that could cause a worker's death or serious injury (Note: Regulation 2-3(1) contains a list of examples of dangerous occurrences. This is not a complete list. Employers are required to report and investigate all dangerous occurrences that occur at their workplaces).

#### Musts

- Have you assigned responsibilities in writing for conducting investigations?
- Do you keep records of training?
- Do you have written procedures for conducting investigations?
- Do you keep accident investigation reports?
- Do you keep records of corrective action and follow-up measures that have been taken to ensure the action is effective?

Once the committee co-chairpersons' investigation is finished, the employer, in consultation with the co-chairpersons, must prepare a written investigation report.

Injuries, occupational illnesses, and conditions that do not require hospitalization should also be investigated. Examples include chronic illnesses, musculoskeletal injuries and exposures to infectious materials.

No specific investigation procedure is set out in the Regulations. Investigation procedures for incidents and dangerous occurrences must fit your needs. Ideally, they should state:

- the objective of your investigations (find and correct root causes);
- who investigates (if supervisors or health and safety coordinators investigate, the occupational health committee co-chairs must be included, or perform their own investigation);
- what training investigators will receive;
- who receives the written investigation reports;
- who must fix defects found during an investigation;
- who follows-up on corrective action and ensures it works;
- what investigation reports and follow up records will be kept;
- who keeps what documents and records; and
- what summary and statistics reports are to be developed, and how often these reports will be prepared.

### **What about investigations of workers' concerns?**

An effective hazard identification system should address workers' concerns as soon as they are identified. This will prevent concerns from becoming refusals to work.

### **What about investigations of refusals to work under Section 3-31 of the Act?**

Under section 3-31, the program must include a procedure for investigating refusals. The procedure lays out the workplace's internal system for investigating refusals and ensures the employer takes sufficient steps to deal with the worker's concerns. The occupational health committee must investigate if the worker continues to refuse the work after the employer has attempted to correct the problem. The committee will determine if the work is safe, and advise the worker.

An occupational health officer should be contacted if the committee cannot agree on the refusal, or if the matter has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the refusing worker. The worker may continue the refusal until the officer provides a written decision.

Your procedure for investigating refusals to work should address:

- Who should be notified about a refusal.
- How the refusing worker will be informed about his or her rights and duties.
- How the committee will investigate a refusal.
- How the worker(s) who take over the duties of the refusing worker will be informed of their rights and duties.
- Who will take corrective action as a result of the investigation and monitor the effectiveness of the action taken.

## Develop a strategy to involve workers

Regulation 3-11(1)(i) requires ... *a strategy for worker participation in occupational health and safety activities, including audit inspections and investigations of accidents, dangerous occurrences and refusals to work pursuant to section 3-31 of the Act.*

An effective health and safety program needs worker commitment and participation. It must be developed in consultation with your occupational health committee. But more than that, all employees need to be involved in your efforts to prevent injuries and occupational illnesses. This is especially important in small organizations, where there may not be the same access to professional health and safety expertise as there is in many large organizations.

Workers must be familiar with the program, know their rights and responsibilities and understand how to handle concerns. Your program should encourage workers to suggest ways to make the workplace safer and healthier.

If workers are going to actively participate in reporting hazards and suggesting improvements, they must know they will not be subjected to reprisals, and that their concerns and suggestions will be taken seriously. The deeds of managers and supervisors speak louder than words.

Your program must also address how the occupational health committee will be kept effective. Methods include:

- training committee members;
- enhancing communication between the committee, workers and senior management;
- responding promptly to problems or concerns raised by the committee; and
- considering the committee's recommendations during the development of plans, policies, programs and procedures required by the legislation.

### Musts

- Have you established an effective occupational health committee?
- Do you maintain occupational health committee minutes?
- Do you follow up on concerns brought forward by the committee and ensure corrective action is effective?
- Do you keep records of committee inspections?
- Do you keep records of audits conducted by the committee?
- Do you keep records of worker participation in the development and implementation of policies, plans and procedures required by the Regulations?

The employer is required to resolve any problem or address any concern raised by the occupational health committee. If that cannot be done, the employer must give the committee a written reason for not resolving the problem or addressing the concern.

The committee should be the internal auditor of the occupational health and safety program. The employer should consult with the committee when preparing the participation strategy.

## Regularly evaluate and revise your program

Regulation 3-11(1)(j) requires... *a procedure to review and, if necessary, revise the occupational health and safety program at specified intervals that are not greater than three years and whenever there is a change of circumstances that may affect the health or safety of workers.*

The procedure should address how your occupational health and safety program will be reviewed and revised, when it will be done and who will do it.

The program must be completely reviewed every three years. Full or partial reviews and revisions are required when there are changes in the workplace that may affect the health or safety of workers, or when defects are discovered. *Changes* include the introduction of new technologies, production methods, or the development of services that produce new hazards. The program should also be reviewed when new risks associated with existing conditions are discovered.

*Defects* may be identified through inspections, systematic audits, or investigations of incidents and dangerous occurrences.

The entire program does not have to be evaluated at once. You may wish to evaluate your program one element at a time. The objective of the review procedure is to ensure that your program works properly and controls new hazards.

See the Appendix for an occupational health and safety program evaluation checklist.

### Musts

- Have you identified and clearly defined a process to evaluate and revise your program with the time intervals specified in the Regulations?



## Use return-to-work programs

A return-to-work program is not a required element of an occupational health and safety program. However, once an injury or illness happens, the focus is to return the injured/ill worker to a productive working life as soon as medically possible. Using a return-to-work program in the rehabilitation process can help do this.

Successful return-to-work programs include the following steps:

1. Reporting injuries and illnesses.
2. Filing required claims forms.
3. Monitoring the recovery process.
4. Implementing the return-to-work plan.
5. Analyzing injury and illness trends.
6. Taking preventative measures.

### **A successful program:**

- Minimize the harm from injury/illness.
- Retains skilled workers.
- Provides a process to return injured/ill workers to work as soon as medically appropriate.

## Summary

- The ultimate goal of an occupational health and safety program is to protect workers by integrating health and safety into the culture and activities of the organization.
- Affected workplaces are listed in the Appendix. An effective program will benefit any workplace.
- Your program must meet regulatory requirements, and must:
  - be in writing;
  - have commitment from the employer and senior management team;
  - have input from the committee;
  - assign responsibility and accountability; and
  - have an evaluation/revision mechanism.
- You are responsible for coordinating the health and safety programs of employers who you have contracted to work at your place of employment.
- Your program must be understood by your workers and, if applicable, explained to your subcontractors and self-employed people.
- The occupational health committee provides input and advice, and audits your occupational health and safety program.
- To carry out your occupational health and safety program:
  1. Write a policy that demonstrates your commitment.
  2. Establish a system to identify and control hazards and emergencies.
  3. Identify people and resources required to deal with emergencies.
  4. Prepare a statement of responsibilities.
  5. Schedule inspections.
  6. Develop plans to control chemicals and biohazards.
  7. Develop a training plan for supervisors and workers.
  8. Develop a procedure to investigate incidents, dangerous occurrences, and refusals to work.
  9. Develop a strategy to involve workers.
  10. Regularly evaluate and revise your program.

# Appendix

## Affected workplaces

Section 3-20 of the Act and Regulation 3-11 require employers at *prescribed* places of employment with ten or more workers to establish and maintain an occupational health and safety program.

These places of employment are listed in Table 7 of the Regulations' Appendix and include:

1. Types of places of employment:
  - (a) hospitals, nursing homes and home care;
  - (b) metal foundries and mills; and
  - (c) mines.
2. Places of employment at which the following types of work are performed:
  - (a) aerial crop spraying, operation of helicopters, water bombing;
  - (b) autobody and automotive paint repairing, bumper electroplating, auto rust proofing, auto glass installation, auto vinyl roofing, fibreglassing boats and autos;
  - (c) building construction;
  - (d) camp catering;
  - (e) farming and ranching;
  - (f) forestry work, other than pulp and paper production;
  - (g) forwarding and warehousing as a business;
  - (h) metal manufacturing and machining, marble works, concrete block and ready mix manufacturing;
  - (i) oil well servicing;
  - (j) oil and gas drilling, well servicing with a rig, water well drilling;
  - (k) processing meat, poultry and fish;
  - (l) road construction and earthwork, urban sewer and water construction, tunnelling;
  - (m) trucking;
  - (n) wholesale baking, dairy products, soft drinks and food preparation and packaging.

## Occupational health and safety program evaluation checklist

Use this to help evaluate your occupational health and safety program.

\*This checklist is based on best practice and has some elements that are not required by legislation. Please see regulation 3-11 for information on the legislative requirements for an occupational health and safety program.

### What criteria must the program meet?

- Is your program workplace specific?
- Does it have commitment at the highest level of management?
- Does it have workers' input and involvement?
- Has it been developed in consultation with the occupational health committee?
- Does it have a mechanism to assign specific responsibilities and a system for accountability?
- Does it include an evaluation mechanism?
- Is each of your program elements in writing?
- Is it readily available to workers and the committee?
- Does it include a statement of the health and safety responsibilities of contracted employers and self-employed people?

### Write a policy that demonstrates commitment

- Is the policy written, communicated and posted?
- Is it understood by all employees?
- Does it specify who is responsible and accountable?
- Are resources allocated?

### **Identify and control hazards and emergencies**

- Have the hazards of work processes, equipment and materials been proactively examined and the risks assessed?
- Has a job safety analysis been done for each hazardous job?
- Has a mechanism been set up to address the workers' concerns?
- Has health and safety been incorporated into all work procedures?
- Have specific responsibilities been assigned for dealing with workers' concerns and for following up on the effectiveness of corrective action?
- Is a mechanism in place to communicate information about hazards and their risks to workers?
- Have hazard controls been put in place (elimination, engineering and so forth)?
- Are equipment logbooks maintained?
- Are maintenance records kept?
- Are the plans, policies and procedures required by the Regulations in place?
- Are statistics kept and appropriate reports regularly compiled?
- Are responsibilities for each task assigned to specific people?

### **Identify people and resources required to deal with emergencies**

- Did you identify and address potential emergencies?
- Do you have a written fire safety/evacuation plan?
- If applicable, do you have written procedures for controlling emergencies involving chemicals and biohazards?
- Do you keep records of emergency training?

### **Prepare a statement of responsibilities**

- Do you have written duties and responsibilities regarding occupational health and safety?
- Do you have a means of ensuring accountability?
- Do you keep records of managers', supervisors' and workers' health and safety performance?

### **Schedule inspections**

- Do you have written procedures and schedules in place for inspections?
- Do you have clearly defined responsibilities for carrying out inspections?
- Have you provided training to those responsible for carrying out inspections?
- Do you keep written inspection reports?

### **Develop plans to control chemicals and biohazards**

- Have you prepared an inventory of chemicals and biohazards?
- Do you have an SDS control system?
- Are SDSs readily available to employees?
- Are records of worker training kept?
- Are records of environmental monitoring kept, if needed?
- Are records of ventilation system maintenance kept, if needed?
- Is a plan for control of infectious substances kept, where required?

### **Develop a training plan for supervisors and workers**

- Do you keep records of orientation?
- Do you keep records of training required by the Regulations (such as training required for forklift operators)?
- Do you keep records of crew talks?
- Are responsibilities for training clearly assigned?
- Are records kept of training provided to occupational health committee co-chairpersons?

### **Develop a procedure to investigate incidents, dangerous occurrences and refusals to work**

- Have you assigned responsibilities in writing for conducting investigations?
- Do you keep records of training?
- Do you have written procedures for conducting investigations?
- Do you keep accident investigation reports?
- Do you keep records of corrective action and follow up measures that have been taken to ensure the action is effective?

### **Develop a strategy to involve workers**

- Have you established an effective occupational health committee?
- Do you maintain occupational health committee minutes?
- Do you follow up on concerns brought forward by the committee and ensure corrective action is effective?
- Do you keep records of committee inspections?
- Do you keep records of audits conducted by the committee?
- Do you keep records of worker participation in the development and implementation of policies, plans and procedures required by the Regulations?

### **Regularly evaluate and revise your program**

- Have you identified and clearly defined a process to evaluate and revise your program within the time intervals specified in the Regulations?

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