Workplace Safety & Prevention Services®

INFORMATION

CLOSING THE LOOP:

Setting up a Health & Safety System in Your Small Business

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services®

If you are a small business owner/operator and you are unsure of where and how to get started in health and safety, this guide is for you!

Closing the Loop is designed to assist you in developing a health and safety system that meets your business needs and reflects the care and support you are committed to providing to your workers. The guide uses a manageable six-step process for creating a health and safety program in a small business.

WSPS is working to update this resource; however, be assured that this version contains very valuable information to support your health and safety needs. In the meantime, to be sure you have access to the most up-to-date legislation, please visit **wsps.ca/SmallBusiness**.

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Congratulations!

You have just taken an important step on the road to zero injuries. You already know what it takes to make your business a success. You work hard to make sure your business runs smoothly: you have systems in place to track your inventory and customer data; you have systems to manage things like accounting and payroll — and by the time you work your way through this guide, you'll have what you need to make health & safety an everyday part of your business, too.

About this Guide

Navigating your way through the rules and regulations that govern workplace health & safety can be challenging. Sometimes it may even seem that the law really wasn't made to reflect the reality of small and medium sized businesses. The truth is health & safety is not rocket science.

In fact, much of it, like so many things in life, is common sense. The purpose of this guide is to help you make sure that health and safety is not something that is left to chance — think of it as a map that will help you set your course and navigate your way to a safer, healthier workplace. The Self-Assessment tool is a place to start. By writing down your policies and your expectations — and reviewing them with your employees, everyone really is working from the same page. By making sure that your employees understand these policies and expectations the same way you do, you plant the seeds for a safe and healthy workplace — and that makes a lot of sense.

The Guide Contains 6 Steps

Step 1 — The Self-Assessment. As you complete the questions, you will have a better picture of where you're on track and where you might have some work to do.

Step 2 — Setting the Stage. Your health & safety policy statement is the foundation for your health & safety system; it sets the stage.

Step 3 — The Right Stuff. This is the protective equipment and systems that will keep your workplace safe.

Step 4 — Health & Safety in Action. These are the policies and practices that become part of your daily routine.

Step 5 — The Internal Responsibility System in Action. This is about bringing your health & safety system to life.

Step 6 — Closing the Loop. This final step brings all of the pieces together — your intent, the right tools and the policies, practices and people that will keep your workplace healthy, safe and successful.

Some of it, You Have to Do

It's true. Some of what you'll be working through in this guide comes straight out of the legislation. That doesn't mean you need to use legal language to meet the intent of the law. Use the language of your workplace, in words that are meaningful to you and your employees. Bigger words don't make better policies.

About Workplace Health & Safety Legislation

Laws are designed to establish the minimum standards for working safely. By conforming to these standards, you are complying with the law. The thing with the law is that it can't anticipate everything that can or might happen in your workplace — that's your job. They call that due diligence. It's up to you to know the hazards that are particular to your workplace or way of working, identify ways of controlling those hazards and share this information with employees.

A Few Words About the Internal Responsibility System

Embedded in the legislation is the concept of the Internal Responsibility System. At its core, it means that we're all responsible for health and safety in our workplaces; it means that we're all looking out for one another. It means that our goal, whether we say it out loud or not, is to go home safe… every time.

Having a health & safety representative (or joint health and safety committee) in your workplace is one way that the internal responsibility system is formalized in your workplace. It's also there in less formal (but no less important) ways — every time you say "be careful" or "let me help you with that" or "we have a new piece of equipment, let me show you how to use it" — that's the internal responsibility system in action.

Business Impacts of Health & Safety

We already know that a safe and healthy workplace makes sense, but did you also consider that it also makes "cents"? Think about it like this. If you and your employees already understand how to do the work safely, then you don't have to spend time thinking about it — that's time you can be using to serve your customers better. Time that you don't have to spend investigating incidents or working short-handed because an employee is recovering from injury is time that can be invested in growing your business. And the more you involve your employees in workplace health and safety, the more they will come to understand how important their health and safety is to you — and when employees believe that their employer cares about them, they are happier and more productive. Let's face it — happier and more productive employees are an important part of a successful business.

Sticks and Carrots

In every jurisdiction, there are significant penalties for not meeting the requirements of the law — at an organizational level and at the individual level, too. In many jurisdictions, you will also find that there are incentives for good health & safety performance. Sometimes these incentives are in the form of rebates; other times, it's public recognition of your status as a good performer.

Contact the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board for more information on incentive programs.

A Living Workplace System

Your health and safety system is not just a binder on a shelf, a file on your computer or a bulletin board hanging on the wall. Your health and safety system is the way you and your employees perform your work each and every day. Every time you take a moment to talk about safety, whether it's a monthly safety talk, reviewing a new procedure, responding to a hazard report or just giving someone a pat on the back for doing it right, you're feeding the system. And with life in the system, health and safety isn't something that's left to chance.

Where Do I Learn More?

As you move through this guide, you'll begin to put the elements of your health and safety system together. Resources on specific hazards for your sector will be available online. There are organizations that are available to support you in your efforts to create and maintain a safe and healthy workplace. Check the Resources section at the end of this guide.

Step 1:

Start Here!

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE SELF-ASSESSMENT

When you're completing the self-assessment, it's important that you're completely honest. It's for your eyes only. These questions are intended to highlight the areas that you need to work on. Some of them will be quick fixes — like posting a document you already have; others will require more time and effort. Determine your priorities and get people involved. The legal requirements don't say anything about having to do all of this yourself. Put your internal responsibility system to work.

Self-Assessment Checklist

Question	Do we have this written down? (Y/N)	Do we do what's written down? (Y/N)	Did we even know we had to do this? (Y/N)	When will this be written down?	When will we start doing what's written down?
SETTING THE STAGE					
1. Do we have a written Occupational Health & Safety Policy statement which is signed, dated and posted in a conspicuous location(s) in the workplace?					
2. Do we have at least one current copy of the occupational health & safety legislation, the regulations that cover this workplace and explanatory materials (from the Ministry of Labour) posted in a conspicuous location(s) in the workplace? (Do I know which regulations cover this workplace?)					
3. Do all employees know their responsibilities when it comes to reporting injuries? (Do you have a copy of the WSIB "In Case of Injury" poster hanging in a visible location?)					
4. Do we have valid first aid certificates posted in the workplace where every worker can see them?					
5. Do we have an Emergency Phone Numbers list posted in strategic locations throughout the workplace for reference, in case of an emergency?					

Notes

Self-Assessment Checklist (continued)

Question	Do we have this written down? (Y/N)	Do we do what's written down? (Y/N)	Did we even know we had to do this? (Y/N)	When will this be written down?	When will we start doing what's written down?
THE RIGHT STUFF					
6. Do we have at least one first aid station containing at least the minimum supplies set out in the first aid regulation in the workplace?					
7. Do we have a Fire Protection Equipment program that includes frequent inspection and replacement of substandard equipment?					
8. Do we have appropriate lockout equipment maintained in the workplace?					
9. Do we have an effective Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) program? Does it include hazard identification, provision of appropriate PPE, training and regular inspections?					

Notes

Question	Do we have this written down? (Y/N)	Do we do what's written down? (Y/N)	Did we even know we had to do this? (Y/N)	When will this be written down?	When will we start doing what's written down?
HEALTH & SAFETY IN ACTION					
10. Do we have an incident investigation process? Do we know what to do in the event of a critical injury or fatality? Do we involve an employee representative in the investigation?					
11. Do we inform all employees of the hazards they will be working with and of all of their duties and responsibilities under the Occupational Health & Safety Act? Can we prove it?					
12. Do we have proper written procedures prepared for all tasks that involve hazards to workers? Do we train all workers who perform these tasks?					
13. Do we have a an inventory of all hazardous materials, a current Material Safety Data Sheet for these materials and appropriate training for employees who use or work closely to the materials as outlined in the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)?					

Notes

Self-Assessment Checklist (continued)

Question	Do we have this written down? (Y/N)	Do we do what's written down? (Y/N)	Did we even know we had to do this? (Y/N)	When will this be written down?	When will we start doing what's written down?
HEALTH & SAFETY IN ACTION					
14. Do we make sure that all contractors/ subcontractors on site have their own WSIB coverage or private insurance coverage? Do we always make them aware of the hazards that they will be working with or nearby?					
15. Do we have a written Emergency Plan that meets the required standards? Is everyone trained to the plan? Do we practice the plan regularly?					
16. Do we use or store any hazardous chemicals? Do we keep track? What about physical hazards like noise or extremes in temperature?					
17. Do we have written standard operating procedures for regularly performed tasks? Do employees receive training?					
18. Do we ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect workers who are required to work alone on a regular or occasional basis? Do we exercise due diligence?					

Notes

Question	Do we have this written down? (Y/N)	Do we do what's written down? (Y/N)	Did we even know we had to do this? (Y/N)	When will this be written down?	When will we start doing what's written down?
HEALTH & SAFETY IN ACTION					
19. Do we have a system in place to allow an employee to refuse work if they feel their life, or the life of another employee, is in immediate danger if they continue that work?					
20. Do we take all reasonable precautions to prevent acts of violence and aggression against employees? Do employees know how to respond to protect themselves from potentially violent or aggressive acts?					
21. Do we take all reasonable precautions to prevent workplace harassment?					
22. Do we design work processes and match equipment and tasks to the capabilities of the employee? Do we eliminate or control work-related health & safety hazards wherever possible?					
23. Do we always review any machinery, equipment or process in a complex/ hazardous situation to ensure the safe operation before work begins?					
24. Do we identify, eliminate or control all workplace and job/task hazards not mentioned elsewhere in this evaluation?					

Self-Assessment Checklist (continued)

Question	Do we have this written down? (Y/N)	Do we do what's written down? (Y/N)	Did we even know we had to do this? (Y/N)	When will this be written down?	When will we start doing what's written down?
HEALTH & SAFETY IN ACTION					
25. Do we meet the standard required by legislation for either a Health & Safety Representative or Joint Health & Safety Committee? Are the names and their respective work locations posted where everyone can see them? (Not sure of the requirements? Check the QUICK REFERENCE at the end of this guide.)					
26. Do we make sure that the Joint Health & Safety Committee members have the time they need to carry out their duties, including establishing an agenda before their meetings, keeping accurate minutes of their meetings and holding their meetings at least every three months?					
27. Do we have a way to allow for the Health & Safety Representative or Joint Health & Safety Committee members to make recommendations to the employer on workplace health & safety issues?					

Notes

Question	Do we have this written down? (Y/N)	Do we do what's written down? (Y/N)	Did we even know we had to do this? (Y/N)	When will this be written down?	When will we start doing what's written down?
HEALTH & SAFETY IN ACTION					
28. Do Health & Safety Representatives/Joint Health & Safety Committee members receive documented general training in planned workplace inspections, investigation techniques and health & safety law?					
29. Do we make sure that Health & Safety Representatives or Joint Health & Safety Committee members receive the appropriate training?					
30. Does the Joint Health & Safety Committee conduct regular, monthly workplace inspections and communicate their documented findings to management?					

Notes

Step 2:

Setting the Stage

POST THIS: YOUR HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT

You've completed your self-assessment and you have highlighted your gaps. Whether you have a lot of gaps, or just a few, it's important to start with first things first: your health & safety policy statement. This statement is more than just legal words on a piece of paper — think of it as a promise — to you and your employees, that you are committed to doing everything possible to ensure that each of you goes home from work safe each day.

Your health & safety policy statement is a legal requirement. It is also the foundation for the health & safety system in the workplace.

Key Elements:

- Your vision of health and safety in the workplace
- Your commitment to comply with, or exceed the requirements of the regulations
- Your commitment to health and safety training and education
- Your vision of how everyone is involved
- Clearly described duties, responsibilities and accountabilities

There are no magic words — it should be written in a way that people are able to "hear" your voice when they read it. The most important part of a health & safety policy statement is the life you bring to it:

- Review it at least once a year, more frequently if there are changes in your workplace
- Involve your employees — supervisors, workers, health & safety representatives
- Make sure you include the health & safety policy statement as part of your new employee orientation
- Post it where employees will see it

Bring Your Health & Safety Policy Statement to Life

Use this worksheet to create the outline for your health & safety policy statement. Answer the questions and watch your statement come to life.

What is my health & safety promise?

(E.g. As the owner/manager of XYZ Company, I am committed to maintaining a healthy and safe working environment for my employees, suppliers and customers… I want everyone who works here to be able to go home safely at the end of each work day…)

How will we do this?

- We will comply with all applicable laws and regulations.
- Everyone has responsibility for health & safety:

Managers and Supervisors:

(Hint: include things like providing proper personal protective equipment and training)

All Employees:

(Hint: include things like reporting hazards and looking out for one another)

You may also want to include a paragraph on how you will maintain a workplace free from violence and harassment.

Sign it. Date it. Hang it up where employees will see it.

Review your policy statement annually, or more frequently if something significant changes in your workplace.

Post this, too

- ☐ Copy of the Occupational Health & Safety Act/Workplace Health & Safety Act
- ☐ Explanatory material (this is prepared by and available from the Ministry of Labour)
- ☐ "In Case of Injury" poster (this is prepared by and available from the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board)
- ☐ Valid First Aid Certificates
- ☐ Names and Locations of First Aiders
- ☐ Names and Locations of Health & Safety Representatives, or Joint Health & Safety Committee Members
- ☐ Emergency Phone Numbers (be sure to include dialling instructions if numbers are pre-programmed):
    - ☐ Fire, Police, Ambulance Services
    - ☐ Poison Control
    - ☐ After Hours Company Contract
    - ☐ City Works/Public Utilities
    - ☐ Hydro
    - ☐ Gas
    - ☐ Ministry of Energy and Environment (Hazardous Spills)
    - ☐ Ministry of Labour (in the event of workplace injury or work refusal)

Step 3:

The Right Stuff

Sometimes the legal requirements for workplace health & safety can appear a little overwhelming. Some of it is simply about having the right stuff on hand — the stuff that will keep your workplace and your employees safe.

First Aid

In every jurisdiction there are requirements for making sure that everyone has access to first aid when they need it. These are the basic requirements to keep in mind:

- ☐ How many first aid kits do we need in our workplace?
- ☐ What supplies do we need to have in our first aid kit?
- ☐ Where are they located? Can employees access the first aid kit quickly if they need to?
- ☐ Who are the designated First Aiders? (Hint: The more people you train, the easier it becomes to ensure that you have a designated First Aider for each shift you operate.)
- ☐ How often are we checking our first aid kit? (Hint: Make it part of your monthly workplace inspection. You should also be checking (and refreshing) after each use.)

You need to keep records of all first aid that is administered. To make it easier, create a first aid log that stays with the first aid kit. It might seem like overkill to record every time someone uses a bandage, but here's the thing — even those minor injuries tell a story. If you find that people are using bandages daily because they pinched their fingers on the same piece of equipment, then you have just identified a hazard in your workplace. Use that information to make your workplace safer.

Fire Protection Equipment

Having a fire protection system also means maintaining that system so that it's in good working order in the event that you need it. Make sure that you're familiar with the type of equipment that you have in your workplace — make it part of your monthly workplace inspection.

- ☐ Emergency Lighting
- ☐ Exit Signs
- ☐ Emergency Exits: make sure they're clear at all times
- ☐ Fire Extinguishers: what type, where are they located, who knows how to use them
- ☐ Fire Alarms: how frequently are they tested, by whom?
- ☐ Pull Stations
- ☐ Sprinkler Systems
- ☐ Voice Communication Systems

Personal Protective Equipment

It's the employer's responsibility to identify and understand the hazards in the workplace. In a perfect world, you would be able to eliminate all hazards. It's not a perfect world. That being the case, you're responsible for providing appropriate personal equipment to your employees and making sure they know how to use it.

When you're selecting personal protective equipment, keep this in mind:

- It must protect the employee from the degree of the hazard
- It must meet all of the legislated safety standards
- It must fit properly and suit the work: equipment that isn't worn because it's uncomfortable or doesn't allow you to perform the work properly offers no protection. Remember: one size does not necessarily fit all

It's important that personal protective equipment is periodically inspected and maintained, particularly if it's not being used all the time. It's also important to make sure that people are using it, and using it in the way it was intended. Check in with employees — see what they like, or don't like, about the equipment. Involve them in the process.

Keep records — who has what equipment, the training they received, inspections and maintenance.

Step 4:

Health & Safety in Action

You've set the stage and you have the right stuff in place. Now you need the policies and practices that match the hazards and needs of your workplace. Remember, policies and practices are not meant to sit on a shelf. They're the things you should be talking about every day. Don't treat them as if they're an additional burden — they're just a part of the way you do things.

Rights, Duties and Responsibilities

Health & Safety law guarantees three basic rights: the right to know, the right to participate and the right to refuse unsafe work. Each of these rights will be explored in greater detail — the right to know as it is entrenched in the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS); the right to participate as it is understood in the context of Joint Health & Safety Committees/ Health & Safety Representatives; and the process for refusing unsafe work. For now, it's important to understand that with each of these rights, comes responsibility.

Everyone has responsibility when it comes to maintaining a safe and healthy workplace:

The Employer

(Maybe you're known as the owner, general manager or the boss):

- Comply with the law
- Provide information, instruction and supervision to workers in order to keep them safe and protect them from hazards in your workplace
- Make sure that equipment, materials and protective equipment are kept in good condition
- Take all reasonable precautions for the protection of the worker (this is called "due diligence")

Supervisors

- Need to know the rules (laws) covering the workplace and follow them
- Need to know the hazards specific to the workplace and inform workers about them
- Make sure workers know the procedures for working safely and that they follow them
- Investigate and resolve work refusals
- Investigate incidents that result in injury

Workers

- Report hazards and incidents/injuries
- Follow safe working procedures
- Use the safety equipment provided (the way it was meant to be used)
- Don't endanger co-workers

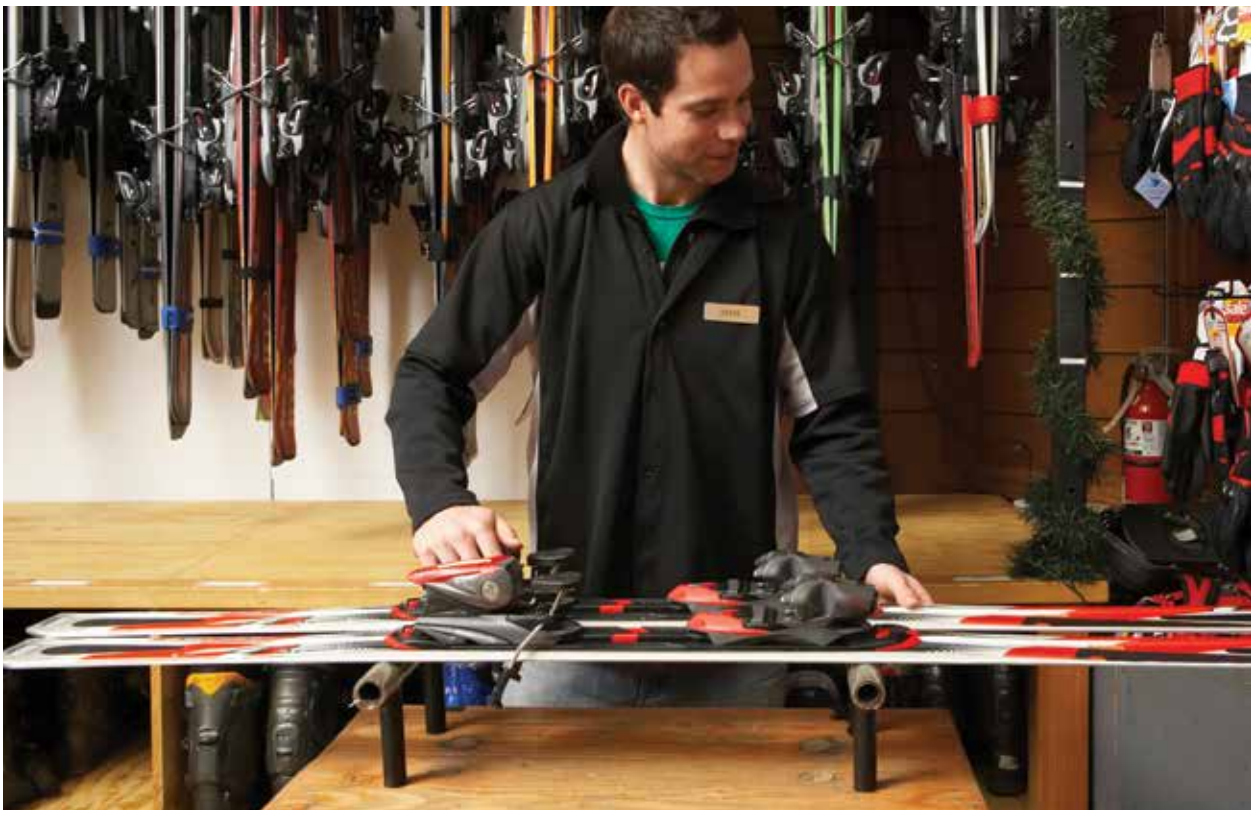
All of these responsibilities represent the "action" part of "Health & Safety in Action".

Hazard Identification and Reporting

No action is more important that identifying a hazard.

What is a hazard? A hazard is something that can **potentially cause harm to a worker** (or a customer or visitor to your attraction or property) **or damage to property**. Some hazards are obvious: a puddle on the floor, a broken ladder, a burnt out light bulb in a storage area; some are less obvious: stiffness or soreness that you feel after performing a particular task (like performing repetitive tasks, standing or sitting for long periods of time), suspicious activity you observe when you're working alone, a chemical odour in the air.

- Make it part of the daily routine: take five minutes at the beginning or end of each shift to talk about hazards — ones that you have observed, ones that employees have observed, maybe just talk about hazards, in general.
- Talk about solutions — the process doesn't end once the hazard is reported — that's just the beginning!
- Make it easy for people to report hazards: Do you want them to call you? Send an email message? Record it in a central location? All of the above? You want to keep track of the hazards being reported because that will help you to identify trends, it's also part of your "due diligence". Keep track of your solutions as well.
- Empower employees to take corrective action. Report the puddle on the floor — and then make sure it gets cleaned up.



Workplace Inspections

Workplace inspections are one way that hazards are brought to light. In Ontario, the law requires that your workplace be inspected at least monthly and that this inspection be performed by your worker health & safety representative (or a worker member of the Joint Health & Safety Committee — see "The Internal Responsibility System in Action" for your specific requirements.) You are required to provide the employee conducting the inspection with the time to do so (and to pay them for that time.) The inspection report and any recommendations must be shared.

A workplace inspection isn't just a checklist. It's also an opportunity to observe employees performing the work and to ask them questions. It gives you a chance to identify potential hazards — and solutions.

It's a good practice to conduct the inspection in pairs, if possible — a second set of eyes is always helpful.

Incident Investigations

Sometimes an incident is a "close call" — if circumstances had been slightly different, someone could have been seriously injured. It is important to investigate these "close calls" to prevent something more serious from happening in the future.

Sometimes an incident does result in an injury. In this case, the first thing to do is to make sure that the injured person receives prompt medical attention. Every jurisdiction will have a process for reporting injuries to the workers' compensation authority. Make sure to familiarize yourself with these procedures.

If an injury is serious enough to be deemed "critical", then it must also be reported to the Ministry of Labour and a formal investigation must be undertaken. The results of the investigation must be submitted to the Ministry of Labour within 48 hours.

In Ontario, an injury is considered critical under these circumstances:

- Fatal or life threatening
- Causes unconsciousness
- Significant blood loss
- Loss of limb
- Major fracture of a limb
- Burns to a major part of the body
- Loss of sight in one or both eyes

One of your responsibilities when a critical injury or fatality occurs at the workplace is to "secure the scene". This means that it is important to leave the scene undisturbed until the Ministry of Labour or police take charge of the scene.

A worker health & safety representative or worker member of the Joint Health & Safety Committee must be involved in the investigation of a critical injury.

It's important that everyone knows what to do in the event of an incident — whether it results in an injury or not.

Common Hazards

There are a number of hazards that are common in small business, regardless of sector.

Musculoskeletal Disorders

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) come in many different forms: sprains and strains, neck and back injuries, disorders like carpal tunnel syndrome and tendinitis, to name a few. The point is, these injuries can have devastating consequences: pain and suffering for the individual; pain in the pocketbook for your business and the compensation system.

Many of these injuries are related to overexertion; and much overexertion in the workplace can be related to material handling, lifting, in particular.

You can prevent or significantly reduce injuries related to lifting by:

- Using mechanical devices such as carts, dollies, forklifts
- Lifting smaller loads
- Using proper lifting techniques like keeping the object close to your body and using your knees instead of your back
- Avoiding awkward postures like bending, twisting or reaching
- Getting help when an item is too heavy
- Varying your activities so you're not using the same muscles for an extended period of time
- Taking appropriate breaks and incorporating team lifting if need be
- Storing heavier items on lower shelves

Slips, Trips, and Falls

Slips and trips can be caused by slippery floor surfaces or untidy and cluttered work areas. Prevent these injuries by:

- Wearing appropriate non-slip footwear
- Maintaining good housekeeping: keep walkways and aisles clear, clean up spills immediately
- Provide appropriate non-slip floor mats
- Don't take shortcuts
- Keeping your line of sight clear when carrying large items

Falls from ladders are not uncommon. If you're working with ladders, follow these precautions:

- Make sure you have the right ladder for the task at hand
- Use a ladder that has slip resistant feet
- Place the ladder on a firm, level surface; don't lean against flexible or movable objects
- Keep the area free of obstructions
- Position your centre of gravity between the siderails
- Don't stand on the top two rungs of the ladder
- Maintain a base of one foot out for every four feet of height
- Don't carry anything in your hands while climbing

Contact with Machinery

Equipment such as slicers, mixers, grinders, maintenance and electrical tools are essential components in some sectors. If not used or maintained properly, machinery and other workplace equipment have the potential to cause serious injuries or fatalities, not to mention work stoppages. Ensure that you provide training on safe use of all machinery and tools. Proper guarding of this equipment will prevent serious crushing injuries, cuts, fractures and amputations. Workers also need to follow specific lock-out procedures for equipment so risk of injury associated with machinery start up is reduced. Make sure that everyone uses the following guidelines:

- Follow manufacturer instructions
- Check that all guards are in place prior to use
- Use the right tool; know how to use it safely
- Beware of moving parts and pinch points
- Don't wear loose clothing or jewelry when working on or around machinery
- Follow lock-out procedures before any measuring, cleaning or maintenance

Cuts and Bruises

Injuries caused by knives and power tools are not uncommon where these tools are used. Ensure that employees follow these safe work practices:

Knives:

- Use the right knife for the job; keep it sharp
- Always cut away from yourself
- Use a flat surface or a cutting board
- Use knives only for their intended purpose — cutting
- Don't clean a knife along the sharp edge
- Avoid talking to others when cutting
- Store knives securely in racks when not using

Power Tools:

- Beware of moving parts
- Use the right tool; know how to use it
- Use it only as it was intended

Exposure to Chemical Hazards

Chemicals are commonly used for cleaning in some sectors. Unfortunately exposure to these hazardous substances can cause serious harm to workers. Steps must be taken to control that exposure. For example, if workers use industrial cleaners, they need to wear the proper personal protective equipment. The area has to be well-ventilated. And chemicals must be handled and stored properly. Employees have to be trained to recognize and use chemicals properly. For example, if employees are using industrial cleaners in the workplace, are they wearing the proper personal protective equipment, are they ensuring that the area is well-ventilated. Are chemicals being handled and stored properly? To prevent irritation, or even serious injury or disease, workers must be trained to recognize and work safely with chemicals.

Common Hazards (continued)

Heat Stress

Heat stress can affect those working indoors and outdoors. Some guidelines for reducing the risk of heat stress in the workplace and to considerably cool things down, would be to:

- Determine appropriate work-rest schedules
- Schedule work to limit exposure in extreme heat; alternate work and rest with frequent rest breaks
- Know the warning signs and symptoms
- Keep hydrated and well-rested, in a cool, ventilated rest area.
- Always pair workers if there is a risk of heat stress
- Dress for the heat and wear protective equipment

Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)

The Right to Know is the premise on which WHMIS is based. It is a system that is used throughout North America to ensure consistent labelling and categorizing of hazardous materials. Employees must receive WHMIS training, which allows them to recognize hazards identified on warning labels and Material Safety Data Sheets; to safely handle, store and dispose of these materials; and to apply appropriate first aid should they come into contact with these materials.

As the employer, you need to ensure that you:

- Maintain an inventory of all hazardous substances used in the workplace
- Maintain up-to-date Material Safety Data Sheets (you can get these from suppliers and manufacturers) and make them accessible to employees
- Ensure hazardous substances are properly labelled
- Provide appropriate personal protective equipment related to the use of these substances
- Provide workplace and job-specific WHMIS training

Working Alone

Working alone, day or night, poses its own particular set of risks. To minimize these risks, it's important to:

- Have someone maintain regular contact with the employee
- Keep emergency phone numbers accessible and up-to-date
- Keep back doors closed
- Avoid having to enter alleys or other secluded places to empty garbage at night
- Acknowledge every person who enters your location
- Keep windows clear of posters and other visual obstructions
- Train employees how to respond to an emergency when they are working alone
- Ensure all tasks and equipment involved can be safely handled by one worker.

Electrical Contact

Anything electrical offers the threat of electrocution. There are many things that can be done to minimize the risk:

- Maintain equipment, with regular inspections and repairs
- Provide training on safe use
- Provide appropriate personal protective equipment
- Keep the areas clean and dry around machines at all times to prevent electrical hazards

Workplace Violence and Harassment

Workplace violence and harassment can occur in any environment. In Ontario, employers are required to have a workplace violence policy and program, as well as a workplace harassment policy and program.

It is acceptable to roll your workplace violence and harassment policies into your overall occupational health & safety policy statement, and must include:

- Your commitment to protecting employees from workplace violence and harassment
- Address violence and harassment from all possible sources (customers, clients, employers, supervisors, employees, strangers and domestic/intimate partners)
- Outline the roles and responsibilities of the workplace parties in supporting the policy and program
- Be dated and signed by the highest level of management at the workplace

You must undertake a risk assessment that considers:

- The potential for violence and harassment based on the nature of the workplace, the type of work or the work conditions
- The circumstances of the workplace and of similar workplaces
- The measures and procedures that will control the risks that have been identified

There are a number of circumstances that may increase the risk of violence or harassment in your workplace:

- Handling cash
- Protecting or securing valuables
- Transporting people and goods
- A mobile workplace (such as a vehicle)
- Public or community contact
- Working with unstable or volatile people
- Working alone or with just a few people
- Working late nights or very early mornings

Involve your employees in creating a program that reflects the unique needs of your workplace.

Work Refusals

You wouldn't want to do work that you felt was unsafe. You wouldn't expect your employees to do work that they felt was unsafe. The law makes provisions for workers to refuse work they believe is unsafe.

It's important to understand that most work refusals never actually become work refusals, at least not in the formal sense. Anytime an employee reports a hazard and you correct it, that's a work refusal that didn't happen.

But there are situations when it may become necessary to invoke the right to refuse. Perhaps your hazard reporting system is in its early stages or it's an urgent matter; perhaps it's a case of differing opinions, between employees or between an employee and a supervisor. The work refusal process is there to protect everyone and everyone should understand how the process works:

An employee can initiate the work refusal process when they have reason to believe that something that they are doing, or are about to do, is unsafe. There are no magic words, however, they do have to report their refusal to work to a supervisor.

Once a supervisor has received the complaint, they must investigate, in the presence of the employee and the employee's health & safety representative. If the supervisor and the health & safety representative agree that an unsafe condition exists, then the employee can be assigned to another task until corrective action is taken.

If the supervisor does not agree and the employee continues to refuse, based on reasonable grounds, the Ministry of Labour is contacted to investigate. While they wait for the Ministry of Labour inspector to arrive, the supervisor can assign the task to another employee provided that they explain the previous employee's reason for refusing, in the presence of the employee's health & safety representative.

Once the Ministry of Labour investigates, they will render their decision and leave an order for corrective action, if necessary. The law says that an employee may not be disciplined for initiating a work refusal in good faith.

Emergency Plan

An emergency fire plan is a legal requirement — you'll need to consult the Fire Code for your jurisdiction for specific requirements. Consider contacting your local fire department for support in developing an emergency fire plan for your location.

You'll also want to consider other types of emergencies:

- Natural disasters
- Gas leaks
- Acts of violence
- Power failures
- Pandemic planning

An effective emergency plan will include:

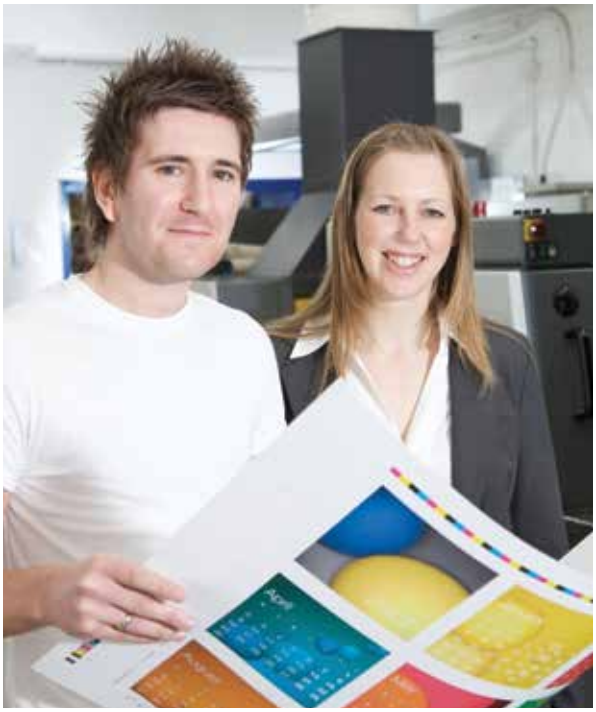
- Up-to-date contact numbers (make sure you also have up-to-date emergency contact information for each employee on file)
- Fire wardens/chain of command
- Evacuation procedures (you may want to make a reciprocal arrangement with a nearby business where you and your employees can gather in the event of a fire or other emergency)
- Business continuity plans
- Training
- Practices and review (you'll want to schedule periodic evacuation drills to make sure employees will know how to react in the event of an emergency)

Orientation: New Employees

New employees are an investment you make in the success of your business. Take the time to help them understand how important a safe and healthy workplace is to you, and their role:

- Understanding their rights, duties and responsibilities according to the law
- Understanding the hazards in your workplace and the work that they will be performing
- Training in safe work practices and procedures, use of personal protective equipment
- Reviewing the emergency plan and procedures
- Understanding your expectations for conduct in workplace

Document your orientation process. Stay in touch with your new workers. Observe how they apply safe work practices. Encourage them to ask questions.



Orientation: Young Workers

Young workers are eager to please. They bring energy and enthusiasm into your workplace. In some cases, you may be their very first employer. The way you bring them on board, the information that you give them matters a lot: this experience will shape their understanding of what it means to work in a healthy and safe workplace and how they contribute to that — not just at your workplace, but the places they will work in the future. The first few months are critical. There are far too many young workers who are injured in the first days or weeks on the job. Show them the ropes:

- Don't take for granted that they will always know the right questions to ask — help them out
- Have them shadow someone who sets a positive example
- Praise them when you observe them following safe work procedures; correct them when they're not

Orientation: Contractors, Visitors and Suppliers

Contractors, visitors and suppliers to your location should be held to the same standard as your employees. If personal protective equipment is required for a particular task, then they should be wearing it, too. If they are performing maintenance or repair work that poses a potential risk, then they should tell you how they're going to control that risk. Make it a point to ask contractors, visitors and suppliers to "sign in" — that way, in the event of an emergency, you'll be able to include them in your evacuation procedure. And make sure that your employees are able to deliver the same message.

Step 5:

The Internal Responsibility System in Action

The Right to Participate. A lot of legislation doesn't seem to consider the unique needs of small workplaces; but you could say that the right to participate is, well, a "right" they got "right". You don't have to do all of this alone; in fact, the law has been set up in such a way that you can't. Be clear — the role of the Health & Safety Representative or Joint Health & Safety Committee is not to "do" health and safety for your workplace. Their role is to support and make recommendations for the maintenance of a safe and healthy workplace. It's a partnership, it's a dialogue; it means that every day, everyone is working toward the same goal.

Representation, Selection and Membership

The following represents some of the minimum requirements for health & safety representation in the workplace:

If you regularly employ 5–19 employees, then you are required to have one health & safety representative, representing employees and selected by employees.

If you regularly employ 20 or more employees, then you are required to have a Joint Health & Safety Committee with 1 member representing the employer and 1 member representing employees. The employer can select their own representative, while the employees are responsible for selecting their member.

Duties

Health & Safety Representatives (and Joint Health & Safety Committee members) have assigned duties, according to the law:

- Identify workplace hazards
- Obtain information about hazards
- Obtain information concerning the taking of tests related to health and safety
- Conduct workplaces inspections, at least monthly
- Be present for, and assist with the investigation of work refusals
- Investigate serious or critical injuries

Joint Health & Safety Committees are required to meet at least every three months and provide agendas and minutes of their meetings.

Recommendations

In small businesses, most employees probably don't make a lot of formal, written recommendations. That doesn't mean however, that recommendations made informally are less important, particularly to the individual making them. Make sure that you follow up, gather feedback, and communicate priorities. Maybe you don't need a formal process in your setting, but talk about the best way to make suggestions and share ideas so that they aren't lost: sending an email, writing it down in a shared journal — whatever makes the most sense for your business.

Health & safety laws are written to protect those who are vulnerable — formal recommendations may be necessary in a very large business, where the health & safety system isn't well understood or well developed, or where the nature of the employer-employee relationship is more adversarial. When Health & Safety Representatives or Joint Health & Safety Committee members make written recommendations to the employer, then the employer is required to respond, in writing, within twenty-one days. Your response must include a timetable for implementing the recommendations with which you agree, or the reasons why you don't agree at this time.

Training for Health & Safety Representatives/Committee Members

The law states that you must have a Joint Health and Safety Committee if your company has 20 or more employees. The committee must have **at least** one worker representative and one management representative. The law also states that **at least** one worker representative and one management representative receive specialized training to carry out their functions. This training is called Certification. Please visit our web site for more information. www.wsps.ca/training

Step 6:

Closing the Loop

Pull these pieces together. Use the questions as a guide. You can create your own documents or use the resources posted online. Remember: there are no magic words and it doesn't need to be complicated. Adapt an existing checklist or combine elements where it makes sense. Get your employees involved. Create a binder or a computer file, review the contents with all employees and then put it in a place where everyone can find it.

Struggling to find something to talk about at your next meeting — pull it out and review one of the topics. Something has changed in your workplace? Pull it out and update it. Your business is successful because of the care and attention you bring to it; your health & safety system will be successful for the same reason. Bring it to life.

Our Health & Safety Policy Statement

Locations of Posted Documents

Names and Locations of Designated First Aiders

Names and Locations of Health & Safety Representatives (or Joint Health & Safety Committee Members)

Emergency Telephone Numbers

First Aid Log

Fire Protection Inspection Checklist: *Combine with your monthly inspection.*

Hazard Reporting: *How do we report hazards in our workplace?*

Personal Protective Equipment: *What Personal Protective Equipment do we need/use in this location? Who has been trained on its use? How frequently do we inspect our equipment?*

Workplace Inspection Checklist: *What do we look for?*

Incident Investigation Report: *Where do we record incidents? What about injuries? Where do we keep the forms?*

Common Hazards/Hazards in Our Workplace: *Make a list of the hazards in your workplace — and how you deal with them.*

Working Alone: *What is our procedure for working alone?*

Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy: *You can combine these policies with your Health & Safety Policy statement.*

Work Refusals: *Make sure everyone knows that they have a right to refuse unsafe work — and a responsibility, too.*

Emergency Plan: *How do we evacuate our location? Where do we meet? How often do we practice evacuation? What about flu season — what precautions do we take, and how do we keep our business going?*

Orientation Checklist: *Make reviewing your health & safety system part of your orientation process for new hires.*

RESOURCES

Quick Reference

Ontario

Provincial Act
Occupational Health & Safety Act

Provincial Regulations
Regulation for Industrial Establishments – Reg. 851
Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) – Reg. 860
First Aid Regulation 1101
Regulation for Construction Projects
Ontario Building Code

Ministry of Labour Guidelines
Guide to the Occupational Health & Safety Act
Guide to Joint Health & Safety Committees
Guide to WHMIS
Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Prevention Guideline

Provincial Authority
Ontario Ministry of Labour

Provincial Compensation Board
Workplace Safety & Insurance Board

Health & Safety Representative/Joint Health & Safety Committee Requirements
5 – 19 employees: Health & Safety Representative
20 – 49 employees: Joint Health & Safety Committee (1 employee rep. /1 management rep.)
50 + employees: Joint Health & Safety Committee (2 employee reps./2 management reps.)

Provincial Training Requirements
Mandatory Health and Safety Awareness Training for Workers
Mandatory Health and Safety Awareness Training for Supervisors
Certification Training (Parts I and II)
WHMIS Training

Provincial Ergonomic Standard
No specific standard – falls under General Duty clause OHSA s.25(2)(h)

Duties of the Employer
Occupational Health & Safety Act s. 25

Duties of the Supervisor
Occupational Health & Safety Act s. 27

Duties of the Worker
Occupational Health & Safety Act s. 28

Toxic Substances
Regulation 833 – Control of Exposure to Biological and Chemical Agents

Work Refusal
Occupational Health & Safety Act s. 43

Noise Hazards
Regulation for Industrial Establishments – Reg. 851 s. 139

Personal Protective Equipment
Regulation for Industrial Establishments – Reg. 851 s. 79 - 86

Violence and Harassment
Occupational Health & Safety Act s. 32

Working Alone
No specific standard – falls under General Duty clause OHSA s. 25(2)(h)

FOR HELP AND SUPPORT IN ONTARIO:

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services
www.wsps.ca
1-877-494-WSPS (9777)

Workplace Safety & Insurance Board
www.wsib.on.ca
1-800-387-0750

Ministry of Labour
www.labour.gov.on.ca
1-877-202-0008

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services

customercare@wsps.ca **1 877 494 WSPS (9777)**

www.wsps.ca

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Workplace Safety & Prevention Services®

WORKPLACE SAFETY & PREVENTION SERVICES

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) is a leader in providing impactful risk management solutions that drive lasting business success for our customers. WSPS offers unparalleled health & safety expertise, insight and solutions for creating healthy work environments where employees thrive and businesses prosper.

A dynamic $43-million organization servicing 165,000 member firms, WSPS is primarily focused on the agricultural, industrial/manufacturing and service sectors. A key player in the Ontario occupational health & safety system, WSPS brings together community and business leaders to influence positive change to create a safer and more profitable Ontario.
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