

How to Implement a Formal Occupational Health and Safety Program



About WorkSafeBC

At WorkSafeBC, we're dedicated to promoting safe and healthy workplaces across B.C. We partner with workers and employers to save lives and prevent injury, disease, and disability. When work-related injuries or diseases occur, we provide compensation and support injured workers in their recovery, rehabilitation, and safe return to work. We also provide no-fault insurance and work diligently to sustain our workers' compensation system for today and future generations. We're honoured to serve the workers and employers in our province.

Prevention Information Line

We provide information and assistance with health and safety issues in the workplace.

Call the information line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to report unsafe working conditions, a serious incident, or a major chemical release. Your call can be made anonymously. We can provide assistance in almost any language.

If you have questions about workplace health and safety or the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, call during our office hours (8:05 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) to speak to a WorkSafeBC officer.

If you're in the Lower Mainland, call 604.276.3100. Elsewhere in Canada, call toll-free at 1.888.621.7233 (621.SAFE).

How to Implement a Formal Occupational Health and Safety Program

Health and safety resources

You can find our health and safety resources on worksafebc.com, and many of them can be ordered from the WorkSafeBC Store at worksafebcstore.com.

In addition to books, you'll find other types of resources at the [WorkSafeBC Store](https://worksafebcstore.com), including DVDs, posters, and brochures. If you have any questions about placing an order online, please contact a customer service representative at 604.232.9704, or toll-free at 1.866.319.9704.

2017 edition

ISSN 1712-6622

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Introduction

Health and safety resources by industry and topic are available at worksafebc.com. For the OHS Regulation and related resources click on Law & Policy.

This booklet is for employers, workers, and joint health and safety committees. It will help you develop and maintain an effective occupational health and safety (OHS) program. The purpose of an OHS program is to prevent injuries and occupational diseases and to deal effectively with any accidents or incidents that occur.

This booklet describes the elements of a formal OHS program, which is required where there is:

- A workforce of 20 or more workers, and at least one workplace at which there is a moderate or high risk of injury, or
- A workforce of 50 or more workers, or
- Where a WorkSafeBC officer requires a formal OHS program

A business with a smaller workforce requires a less formal OHS program. For more information see the publication [Small Business Health & Safety Log Book](#), available on worksafebc.com. Other resources for small businesses are available on the [WorkSafeBC small business web page](#).

An effective program will:

- Identify hazards in the workplace
- Eliminate or minimize the potential for injuries, disease, or loss of life
- Limit financial losses resulting from injuries and disease
- Be monitored to ensure that it meets its goals and WorkSafeBC requirements

This booklet explains the responsibilities for health and safety, describes the elements of a formal program, and outlines the role of the joint committee. This booklet will help you comply with WorkSafeBC requirements but it does not replace the *Workers Compensation Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation*. For specific requirements related to these topics, refer to sections 115 to 140 of the *Workers Compensation Act* and Part 3 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation*.

Responsibilities for health and safety

First aid

The employer has a responsibility to provide first aid to workers. First aid includes the equipment, supplies, facilities, first aid attendants, and services to provide adequate and appropriate first aid to workers if they are injured at work, and to transport injured workers to medical treatment.

For more information on first aid requirements, visit worksafebc.com. Click on Health & Safety, and then under A-Z index click on F for first aid topics. Or contact WorkSafeBC Certification Services at 604.276.3090, or toll-free at 1.888.621.7233.

The most effective OHS programs are developed jointly by management and staff. Read this section for information on the general responsibilities of employers, supervisors, workers, prime contractors, and owners. The purpose is to help everyone understand their own roles and the roles of others so they can work toward common health and safety goals.

Employer's responsibilities

Employers have both general and specific responsibilities related to hazard control and worker health and safety. In carrying out these duties, management — from the chief executive officer through to the first-level supervisor — can demonstrate their commitment to health and safety in the workplace.

General responsibilities

- Ensure the health and safety of the employer's workers and other workers present at the workplace.
- Establish occupational health and safety policies and an OHS program.
- Provide general direction to management, supervisors, and workers about their responsibilities and roles in providing a safe and healthy workplace.
- Provide specific direction and delegate authority to those responsible for health and safety.
- Consult and cooperate with individuals carrying out occupational health and safety duties (including joint committee members, worker health and safety representatives, and WorkSafeBC prevention officers).
- Provide workers with the information, instruction, training, and supervision necessary to protect their health and safety.
- Provide supervisors with the support and training necessary to carry out their health and safety responsibilities.
- Provide and maintain protective equipment, devices, and clothing, and ensure that they are used.
- Make a copy of the *Workers Compensation Act* and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation readily available for review by workers.

Hazard control responsibilities

- Identify potential hazards through regular inspections, and either eliminate or control the hazards without delay.
- Remedy any workplace conditions that are hazardous to worker health or safety.
- Develop written safe work procedures.
- Encourage workers to express concerns and suggest improvements on health and safety issues, for example, through safety talks, meetings, or consultation with worker representatives.

Supervisor's responsibilities

Forms, samples, and checklists

"Sample supervisor training checklist,"
page 32

Supervisors should give health and safety the same priority as productivity or quality control. They must know and comply with occupational health and safety requirements. A supervisor is defined in the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation as "a person who instructs, directs and controls workers in the performance of their duties." Any worker (management or staff) who meets this definition of supervisor has the responsibilities of a supervisor for the workers under their control.

General responsibilities

- Ensure the health and safety of all workers under their direct supervision.
- Know the WorkSafeBC requirements that apply to the work being supervised and ensure that they are followed.
- Ensure that workers under their supervision are made aware of all known or reasonably foreseeable health and safety hazards where they work.
- Consult and cooperate with joint committee members or worker health and safety representatives, and cooperate with others carrying out occupational health and safety duties (including WorkSafeBC prevention officers).
- Ensure that the appropriate personal protective equipment and clothing are available, properly worn when required, and properly inspected and maintained.
- Investigate unsafe conditions reported to them and ensure that corrective action is taken without delay.

WorkSafeBC has developed a free, online course, [Supervising for Safety](#), to help supervisors meet their workplace safety obligations.

Worker's responsibilities

Workers have general responsibilities for their own health and safety and that of other workers. In addition, workers have the responsibility to refuse unsafe work, and neither an employer nor a union can take discriminatory action against workers for refusing to do unsafe work.

General responsibilities

- Cooperate with the joint committee or worker health and safety representative, WorkSafeBC prevention officers, and any other person carrying out occupational health and safety duties.
- Learn and follow safe work procedures.
- Be alert to hazards, and report hazards or problems to the supervisor or employer.
- Use the protective clothing, devices, and equipment provided.
- Perform work in a safe manner. Do not engage in horseplay or work while impaired by alcohol, drugs, or other causes.

In the Regulation

Workers have the right to refuse unsafe work, and employers must investigate the matter. The procedure for refusal of unsafe work is set out in Part 3, sections 3.12 and 3.13, of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.

Responsibility to refuse unsafe work

- Refuse to do work that they have reasonable cause to believe would create an undue hazard to the health and safety of any person.
- Immediately report an unsafe situation to their supervisor or employer.

Prime contractor's responsibilities

In a multiple-employer workplace (where there are two or more employers working at the same time), a prime contractor should be specifically designated as a prime contractor for the purposes of the *Workers Compensation Act* through written agreement. If there is no written agreement, the owner is deemed to be the prime contractor. Each employer at a multi-employer workplace must designate a supervisor and inform the prime contractor of the supervisor's name.

General responsibilities

- Ensure the coordination of occupational health and safety activities of employers, workers, and other persons at the workplace.
- Establish and maintain a system or process that will ensure compliance with occupational health and safety requirements at the workplace. (Individual employers are still responsible for the health and safety of their own workers.)

Owner's responsibilities

The owner of a worksite has responsibilities for a safe and healthy workplace. These are in addition to any other responsibilities the owner may have as the employer or prime contractor.

General responsibilities

- Maintain the land and premises used as a workplace in a manner that ensures the health and safety of persons at or near the workplace.
- Give the employer or prime contractor at the workplace any information known to the owner that is necessary to identify and eliminate or control hazards.
- Comply with occupational health and safety requirements and orders.

Responsibilities of others

Suppliers of tools and equipment and directors and officers of a corporation also have responsibilities for health and safety under the *Workers Compensation Act*. If a person has two or more functions (for example, employer and owner), the person must meet the obligations of each function. For more information, see sections 120 to 124 of the *Workers Compensation Act*.

When a formal OHS program and a joint committee are required

All employers are required to have an OHS program. The type of program depends on the size of the workforce and the nature and extent of the risks and hazards in the workplace. This booklet describes a formal OHS program, which has several required elements. Small businesses may have a less formal, or basic, program. If the workplace is large enough, a joint health and safety committee is required. In a smaller workplace, there may be a worker health and safety representative instead. The joint committee or worker representative assists the employer in implementing and maintaining the OHS program.

Is a formal OHS program required?

Follow these three steps to see if a formal or basic OHS program is required.

Determine how many workers are regularly employed in your operation. Include all workers, supervisors, and managers who have been employed for at least one month.

Determine the hazard classification. Workplaces are classified as either low (L) risk or not low risk — that is, moderate (M) or high (H) risk. For guidance in determining the hazard rating and using the “Assigned hazard rating list” see OHS Guideline G3.16, First Aid Assessment, or talk to a WorkSafeBC prevention officer.

Assigned hazard rating

The “Assigned Hazard Rating List” is available on [worksafebc.com](https://www.worksafebc.com).

Use the table below to determine the type of program required.

Number of workers	Program required for workplace based on hazard rating		
	Low	Medium	High
Fewer than 20	Less formal*	Less formal*	Less formal*
20 or more but fewer than 50	Less formal*	Formal	Formal
50 or more	Formal	Formal	Formal

- * A WorkSafeBC prevention officer may require some smaller workplaces to update their program from a less formal (basic) program to a formal program in situations such as:
- High-risk work (such as logging or pile driving)
 - A high number of injury claims
 - Serious injuries or fatalities
 - Repeated non-compliance with the *Workers Compensation Act* or Occupational Health and Safety Regulation

Is a joint health and safety committee required?

Use the following table to see whether your workplace requires either a joint committee or a worker health and safety representative. If an employer has more than one workplace, use the number of workers at each individual workplace to see the type of representation required for each workplace. Note that you consider only the size of the workplace, not the hazard rating.

Number of workers	Representation for workplaces (with any hazard rating)
9 or fewer	None*
More than 9, fewer than 20	Worker health and safety representative
20 or more	Joint committee

- * In certain circumstances, WorkSafeBC may order an employer to have a worker health and safety representative.

The duties and functions of the committee are described on pages 18–22, “Joint health and safety committees.” Where the term “joint committee” is used in this booklet, worker health and safety representatives may adapt the information for their use.

Elements of a formal OHS program

In the Regulation

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, section 3.3(a) requires formal OHS programs to include “a statement of the employer’s aims and the responsibilities of the employer, supervisors and workers.”

Every workplace is different. The OHS program should be designed to address the specific needs of the individual workplace.

All formal OHS programs must have seven elements:

- An OHS policy statement of the aims of the program and the responsibilities for health and safety
- Regular inspection of premises, machinery, tools, equipment, and work practices
- Appropriate written instructions for workers
- Periodic management meetings to discuss health and safety
- Investigation of accidents and other incidents in order to take action to prevent similar incidents
- Records and statistics
- Instruction and supervision of workers

1. OHS policy

Forms, samples, and checklists

“Sample policy statement for OHS program,” page 24

An OHS program requires a statement of the employer’s aims and the responsibilities of the employer, supervisors, and workers. This statement — called a policy — typically states:

- The employer’s commitment to the OHS program
- The employer’s commitment to protect the health and safety of workers
- The aims and priorities of the OHS program
- The responsibilities of the employer, supervisors, and workers

A good health and safety policy should be simply written and easy to understand. It does not need to be longer than a few paragraphs. The written policy should be signed by the CEO or senior manager on site. It should be dated and reviewed annually. All workers should be made aware of the policy and its importance. For example, it could be given to all new workers and posted in the workplace.

2. Regular inspections

Regular inspections of the workplace are intended to:

- Identify conditions and unsafe acts with the potential to cause injury or disease
- Determine necessary corrective measures
- Prevent unsafe work conditions from developing

In the Regulation

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, section 3.3(b) requires formal OHS programs to include “provision for the regular inspection of premises, equipment, work methods and work practices, at appropriate intervals, to ensure that prompt action is undertaken to correct any hazardous conditions found.”

See sections 3.5 to 3.8 and section 4.3 for additional information on workplace inspections. These sections include regular inspections of tools and equipment, special inspections, and the participation of the joint committee or worker health and safety representative.

Forms, samples, and checklists

“Inspection checklist and report,” pages 25–30

Three different kinds of inspections are described below:

- Regular, planned workplace inspections: Inspect buildings, structures, grounds, excavations, tools, equipment, machinery, and work methods and practices for hazards that might cause injury or disease. Schedule these inspections at appropriate intervals to prevent unsafe conditions developing. Depending on the workplace and the type of hazards that might develop, inspections may be scheduled daily, weekly, or monthly.
- Equipment inspections: Workers should be trained to inspect their machinery, tools, and equipment regularly, following the manufacturer’s recommendations. The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation may also have specific requirements. For example, an elevating platform must be inspected by the operator before use on each shift (required by section 13.3 of the Regulation).
- Special inspections: The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation requires a special inspection after a malfunction or accident to ensure that work does not resume until it is safe to do so.

Workplace inspections

An inspection team includes both worker and management representatives. The team should be familiar with the work process and, whenever possible, include members of the joint committee or the worker health and safety representative.

A worksite inspection checklist can help ensure that inspections are thorough, results are recorded, and the inspection process is standardized. A checklist is particularly useful in guiding those unfamiliar with the inspection process. The checklist should be adapted to suit the needs of your workplace.

Any unsafe or harmful conditions found during a regular inspection must be reported immediately to the supervisor or employer and remedied without delay.

Record and communicate all significant findings. A form such as the sample on pages 25–30 can be used to record each hazard identified and the measures to be taken to eliminate or control each hazard. Provide a copy for the joint committee, and make a copy available to workers (for example, post a copy on the OHS bulletin board).

3. Written instructions

Health and safety, productivity, and quality control all benefit from written procedures. Written procedures can help train new workers and establish a consistent level of work performance.

In the Regulation

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, section 3.3(c) requires formal OHS programs to include “appropriate written instructions, available for reference by all workers to supplement this Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.”

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation requires written safe work procedures for a number of activities. A written safe work procedure lists the steps in doing a task safely — for example, it tells how to safely lock out a piece of equipment before doing maintenance.

Here are examples of some of the activities where the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation requires written work procedures:

- Lockout
- Confined space entry
- Fall protection
- Personal protective equipment
- Violence in the workplace
- Emergency evacuation
- Chemical spills clean-up
- Asbestos removal
- Working alone or in isolation

Forms, samples, and checklists

“Sample safe work procedure: Handling garbage safely,” page 31

Not all tasks require detailed written procedures. Other types of written instructions may be appropriate. For some tasks, safety issues can be addressed verbally in crew talks or during training. In deciding whether or not written procedures are required, consider the following:

- The requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation
- The level of hazard
- The number of workers doing the work
- The experience of the workers
- How frequently the work is being done
- The severity of injuries that might result if correct procedures are not followed
- Recommendations for written procedures as a result of an inspection or investigation

Written safe work procedures should be developed in consultation with the joint committee and workers who do the job. Provide workers with copies or post the procedures in the area where the work activity occurs.

Review these procedures whenever a job changes, new equipment is introduced, or workers return after an extended absence. In addition, work procedures may need to be adjusted as the result of recommendations from an inspection or from an investigation into an incident.

4. Management meetings

In the Regulation

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, section 3.3(d) requires formal OHS programs to include “provision for holding periodic management meetings for the purpose of reviewing health and safety activities and incident trends, and for the determination of necessary courses of action.”

A formal OHS program requires management meetings to review health and safety activities and incident trends. Management meetings can be used to:

- Review existing policies and procedures
- Review feedback from workers
- Consider reports and other information provided by the joint committee
- Address questions or concerns brought directly to management
- Review reports and other information about health and safety in workplaces performing similar work, as well as general information about workplace injury and disease prevention, to improve the existing OHS program

Recommendations for action from the joint committee should be considered and acted upon by:

- Developing an action plan for implementing the recommendation, or
- Suggesting an acceptable alternative

Management decisions and activities on health and safety matters should be communicated to supervisors and workers.

5. Investigations

An effective OHS program has a process for investigating all accidents and incidents that had the potential to cause an injury or disease. The purpose of an investigation is to identify the cause or causes and to recommend steps to prevent similar unsafe conditions.

In the Regulation

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, section 3.3(e) requires formal OHS programs to include “provision for the prompt investigation of incidents to determine the action necessary to prevent their recurrence.”

Other relevant sections include 3.28 (Participation by employer or representative of employer and worker representative), as well as sections 172 to 177 of the *Workers Compensation Act*.

What is an incident?

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation defines an incident as “an accident or other occurrence which resulted in or had the potential for causing an injury or occupational disease.” Incidents include the following:

- Accidents in which a worker is injured or killed
- Accidents in which no one is hurt but equipment or property is damaged
- Near misses (no visible injury or damage but the incident could have resulted in a serious injury, death, or property damage)
- Serious incidents you need to report to WorkSafeBC

Employers must immediately notify WorkSafeBC of any serious incidents that:

- Resulted in serious injury to a worker or the death of a worker
- Involved a major structural failure or collapse of a building, bridge, tower, crane, hoist, temporary construction support system, or excavation
- Involved the major release of a hazardous substance
- Involved a fire or explosion that had a potential for causing serious injury to a worker
- Occurred as a result of any blasting accident or other dangerous incident involving explosives

To report a serious incident, call 604.276.3100 in the Lower Mainland or 1.888.621.SAFE (7233) toll-free in B.C.

In the event of a serious incident, the scene must be secured and left undisturbed until a WorkSafeBC officer releases it (except for attending to injured workers and preventing further injuries).

Forms

The [Employer Incident Investigation Report](#) (form 52E40) is available at worksafebc.com.

Incidents the employer must investigate

Employers must immediately investigate the above serious incidents as well as any incidents that:

- Resulted in injury to a worker requiring medical treatment
- Did not involve injury to a worker, or involved only minor injury not requiring medical treatment, but had a potential for causing serious injury to a worker.

Incident investigations should be carried out by persons knowledgeable about the type of work being done. Where possible, investigations should involve both worker and employer representatives and members of the joint committee. An incident investigation report must include the following information:

- The place, date, and time of the incident
- The names and job titles of persons injured in the incident

- The names of witnesses
- A brief description of the incident
- A statement of the sequence of events that led up to the incident
- Identification of any unsafe conditions, acts, or procedures that contributed to the incident
- Recommended corrective actions to prevent similar incidents
- The names of persons who investigated the incident

Employer duties

Sections 172 to 177 of the *Workers Compensation Act* outline investigation and reporting requirements.

Forms

Visit worksafebc.com
and click on Claims >
Report a workplace
injury or disease

1. If one or more workers were injured, fill out
 - [Form 7: Employer's Report of Injury or Occupational Disease](#) and send copies to WorkSafeBC or submit online.
2. Determine who will investigate the incident.
3. Conduct a preliminary investigation to identify the unsafe conditions or acts that significantly contributed to the incident, and list the recommended corrective actions.
4. Conduct a full investigation:
 - Determine the cause or causes of the incident.
 - Identify any unsafe conditions, acts, or procedures that contributed to the incident.
 - Recommend corrective action to prevent similar incidents.
5. Prepare incident investigation report.
6. Provide copy of report to the joint committee or worker health and safety representative (and to WorkSafeBC if required), and post the report at the workplace.
7. Take corrective action required to prevent reoccurrence of similar incidents.
8. Prepare follow-up report on corrective action taken.
9. Provide copies of corrective action reports to the joint committee or worker health and safety representative, and post the report at the workplace.
10. Follow up to ensure corrective action was taken and was effective at preventing the recurrence of similar incidents.

For more detailed information about the investigation process, visit [Conducting an employer investigation](#) on worksafebc.com.

In the Regulation

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, section 3.3(f) requires formal OHS programs to include “the maintenance of records and statistics, including reports of inspections and incident investigations, with provision for making this information available to the joint committee or worker health and safety representative, as applicable and, upon request, to an officer, the union representing the workers at the workplace or, if there is no union, the workers at the workplace.”

6. Records and statistics

In a formal OHS program, records typically include:

- Inspection reports and records of corrective actions taken
- Incident investigation reports and records of corrective actions taken
- Worker orientation records
- Records of worker and supervisor training showing the date, names of attendees, and topics covered (for example, lockout and WHMIS training)
- Records of meetings and crew talks at which safety issues were discussed
- Supervisors’ notes and logs of safety contacts
- Records showing use of progressive discipline to enforce safety rules and written safe work procedures
- Joint committee meeting reports showing steps taken to address health and safety issues
- Subcontractor pre-qualification documents
- Equipment logbooks and maintenance records
- First aid records, medical certificates, and hearing tests
- Forms and checklists (for example, confined space entry permits) showing requirements for safe work procedures
- Sampling and monitoring records for work around harmful substances
- Emergency response plan, record of drills, and any resulting improvements

Statistics

Accident and injury statistics are useful for identifying trends and for measuring the effectiveness of health and safety activities and programs. The table below outlines some ways you might use data from incidents for statistical analysis:

Type of incidents	Types of data	Statistical analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Near misses• First aid only• Health care only• Time-loss injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of incidents• Frequency of incidents• Number of injuries• Types of injuries• Severity of injuries• Number of days lost	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compare monthly and annual results• Compare type of work or activity• Compare shifts• Compare worker experience and training

Injury rates

WorkSafeBC calculates average injury rates for various industry groups as well as a provincial average for all industries. Individual workplaces can also calculate their own injury rate as follows:

$$\text{Injury rate} = \text{STD claims} \times 100 / \text{FTEs}$$

Where:

- STD is the number of short-term disability claims accepted by WorkSafeBC in a specified time period. These do not include health care only claims, long-term or permanent disability claims (LTDs), or fatalities.
- FTE is the number of full-time equivalent employees employed during the specified time period.

Low injury rates can be used as a general indicator of the success of a good health and safety program. However, they do not distinguish the type of injuries, the length of time lost, the total cost of the injuries, or the severity of injuries.

Comparing injury rates is only one of many indicators used to measure successful health and safety programs.

7. Instruction and supervision of workers

In the Regulation

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, section 3.3(g) requires formal OHS programs to include “provision by the employer for the instruction and supervision of workers in the safe performance of their work.”

Section 3.23 identifies the topics that must be included in orientation and training for new and young workers.

It is the employer’s responsibility to ensure that every worker receives adequate instruction to do their work safely. This is usually done through education and training. Education generally refers to formal classroom instruction that may include lectures, discussions, and videos. Training generally refers to hands-on, job-specific instruction provided individually or in small groups to workers. Training often includes demonstrations and active participation by workers so that supervisors can confirm that workers understand safe work procedures.

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation specifies particular orientation and training requirements for new and young workers. See [worksafebc.com](https://www.worksafebc.com) and the resource [Support for Employers: Training and Orientation for Young and New Workers](#) for more information.

An education and training record should be maintained for each worker, listing topics covered and date of education or training. Education and training records should be reviewed periodically to ensure that training requirements have been met.

Forms, samples, and checklists

“Sample supervisor training checklist,” page 32

Supervisors must supervise their workers to ensure that they follow safe work procedures. Adequate supervision includes:

- Ensuring proper training of workers
- Observing workers after training to ensure that they continue to follow safe work procedures
- Making informal inspections on a daily basis to ensure safe work procedures are being followed, including the proper use of protective equipment, devices, and clothing provided
- Enforcing safety rules and safe work procedures
- Conducting informal discussions (crew talks) with workers to discuss specific safety issues as they arise

The following are some examples of education and training topics, who may receive them, and what they should include.

Education and training topics

Topic	Type of workers or industries	Key content (not inclusive)
New worker orientation	All workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location of first aid equipment and services • Reporting accidents, injuries, and unsafe conditions • Safe work procedures • Right to refuse unsafe work • Location of fire exits, routes, and safe gathering areas • Emergency procedures
WHMIS	All workers who are or may be exposed to hazardous materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and understanding labels • Understanding information on SDSs • Location of SDSs • Hazards of products being used • Controls measures and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
Personal protective equipment (PPE)	Various industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When, why, where, and how to use specific PPE • Limitations of protection • Regular inspection and maintenance
Preventing violence	Service industries such as retail; health care; workers who work alone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define violence and types of incidents • Identifying risk factors • Preventing and defusing incidents • Control measures

Topic	Type of workers or industries	Key content (not inclusive)
Lockout	Machinists, workers on production lines; various manufacturing industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define lockout • Types of lockout • When to lock out • Review specific procedures for specific equipment
Confined space	Various industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the hazards of each confined space • Procedures for working safely in a specific space as set out in the confined space entry program
Fall protection	Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall protection system being used • Fall protection procedures • Proper use of fall protection equipment
Chemical hazards (such as lead, asbestos) Biological hazards (such as HIV, hepatitis) Physical hazards (such as noise, vibration, heat, cold, radiation)	Various industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential health effects of exposure • Common routes of exposure • Ways to prevent exposure • Proper use of controls • How to recognize signs and symptoms of exposure

Joint health and safety committees

Resources

Resources for joint health and safety committees are available at worksafebc.com — click on “I am a ...” at the top of the page and select Health & safety committee member.

A joint health and safety committee is made up of worker and employer representatives working together to identify any health and safety problems and make recommendations to the employer on health and safety issues. The joint committee advises the employer on the OHS program and any other required programs and monitors their effectiveness. To be successful, the committee must operate in an atmosphere of cooperation and commitment to health and safety in the workplace. Joint committees must meet at least once a month.

This booklet gives a brief overview of joint committees and their role in the formal OHS program. For further details and sample forms and checklists, visit worksafebc.com.

Duties of the joint committee

In the Act and Regulation

Sections 125 to 140 of the Act and sections 3.26 and 3.27 of the Regulation set out requirements for joint committees. The Act includes topics such as the selection of employer and worker representatives, duties and functions of the joint committee, the employer’s obligation to respond to recommendations and to support the committee, and committee reports.

The *Workers Compensation Act* sets out the following duties and functions of the joint committee:

- To identify situations that may be unhealthy or unsafe for workers and advise on effective systems for responding to those situations
- To consider and expeditiously deal with complaints relating to the health and safety of workers
- To consult with workers and the employer on issues related to occupational health and safety and occupational environment
- To make recommendations to the employer and the workers for the improvement of the occupational health and safety and occupational environment of workers
- To make recommendations to the employer on educational programs promoting the health and safety of workers and compliance with the *Workers Compensation Act* and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation and to monitor their effectiveness
- To advise the employer on programs and policies required and to monitor their effectiveness
- To advise the employer on proposed changes to the workplace or the work processes that may affect the health or safety of workers
- To ensure that accident investigations and regular inspections are carried out as required
- To participate in inspections, investigations, and inquiries
- To carry out any other duties and functions prescribed by regulation

Joint committee membership

A joint committee includes:

- At least four members
- Both worker and employer representatives; at least half of the members must be worker representatives
- Two co-chairs, one selected by the worker representatives and the other by the employer representatives

Seasonal operations

Many industries in British Columbia operate seasonally, presenting special problems for organizing the committee. There is usually a permanent core staff who could act as a nucleus of the committee. Also, quite often there are seasonal workers who have worked for the organization on previous occasions and will have the experience to act as useful members. Meetings during the off-season are not always practical, but administrative planning and maintenance should include considerations for health and safety. These factors can be planned for by the committee in regular meetings during the active season.

The size and structure of the committee will vary depending on the:

- Degree of hazard in the workplace
- Number of workers
- Number of departments
- Number of labour groups or work groups
- Number of worksites and work shifts
- Diversity of work being done

Committee members should be chosen for their ability to get the job done, their knowledge of various work processes, and ability to work cooperatively with others. There is no specific requirement for how long members serve on a committee. The committee should consider a term that will keep up enthusiasm, encourage fresh ideas, and promote efficiency through continuity.

Employers must post the names and work locations of committee members at the workplace.

Employer representatives

The employer must select representatives from those who exercise managerial functions for the employer at the workplace. An individual employer can act as an employer representative.

It is important that employer representatives have the authority to make commitments and to speak on behalf of the employer at committee meetings. Since the committee itself does not have the power to act on its own recommendations, the committee depends on the authority of the employer representatives to finalize matters agreed upon at a meeting.

Worker representatives

Workers must select representatives from workers who do not exercise managerial functions at the workplace.

Select representatives to effectively represent:

- Unionized and non-unionized workers
- Workers from different labour groups

- Workers doing high hazard jobs
- Workers on different shifts
- Workers in different departments

Alternates

Alternates should be selected to attend meetings or conduct committee business when regular members are not available. Alternates should be selected at the same time as regular members.

Education and training for committee members

All new joint committee members are required to receive eight hours of training and instruction on the following topics:

- The duties and functions of a joint committee
- The rules of procedure of the joint committee
- The requirements around conducting incident investigations
- The requirements around conducting regular workplace inspections
- The requirements around responding to a refusal of unsafe work
- The requirements for annually evaluating the joint committee

Each member of a joint committee is also entitled to an annual educational leave totalling eight hours to attend OHS training courses.

In addition, it is good practice to set aside part of every meeting for education. Members with certain expertise can prepare and deliver a talk, suppliers can be invited to discuss equipment and materials, and professionals from outside organizations can also be included. Members can be sent to seminars and report to the committee.

Joint committee support for the OHS program

The regular meeting should not be the only time when members concern themselves with the OHS program. Not all safety-related problems can wait until the next meeting for resolution.

Outside the regular meeting, members should monitor ongoing health and safety procedures. Hazards can be identified and recommendations made to workers and employers that will improve conditions. Members are in a good position to promote cooperation throughout the operation.

In addition to the regular meeting, members may be required to:

- Deal with complaints relating to health and safety
- Advise the employer on programs and monitor their effectiveness
- Participate in workplace inspections (see page 9)
- Participate in investigations of accidents or incidents (see page 11)

Worker complaints

Workers should be instructed that complaints concerning health and safety should be directed to their supervisor. However, if the situation is not handled to the worker's satisfaction, a committee member should be contacted. The member can work with the supervisor and the committee, if needed, to resolve the complaint. It is important to keep the worker informed of the disposition of the matter. The joint committee must not be used as a grievance committee.

Monitoring the effectiveness of health and safety programs

Depending on the workplace, there may be a number of health and safety programs in addition to the formal OHS program. These might include a WHMIS program, an emergency plan, a noise control and hearing conservation program, a confined space entry program, and a respirator program. Employers are required to consult with joint committees on the development, maintenance, and review of many of these programs.

Most programs should be reviewed at least annually to ensure that they are effective and to consider changes in the workplace and work activities.

Effective committees

[Section 3.26 of the OHS Regulation](#) requires joint committees to conduct an annual evaluation of their effectiveness. WorkSafeBC has developed an [Evaluation tool](#) to facilitate this process.

The effectiveness and credibility of both the committee and the employer depend on results. The committee itself is only an advisory body, making recommendations to the employer. The employer may accept the committee's recommendation or may give reasons for not accepting them. The committee should communicate the results of recommendations to workers along with any explanations.

Committee members should not attempt to bypass normal employer channels of supervision or control. Health and safety are part of the job and should be dealt with on the job. Reporting hazardous conditions and procedures and taking corrective action is a matter for immediate attention through normal channels. Do not wait until the next meeting.

Forms, samples, and checklists

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Sample policy statement for OHS program

Include a policy statement in your OHS program that reflects your company's commitment to health and safety in the workplace.

Health and safety policy

_____ (name of business) wants its workplace to be a healthy and safe environment. To achieve this, our company will establish and maintain an occupational health and safety program designed to prevent injuries and disease. Our employer is responsible for providing workers with adequate instruction in health and safety and for addressing unsafe situations in a timely, effective manner. All workers and service contractors are required to work safely and to know and follow our company guidelines for safe work procedures.

Signed:

Date:

Employer's responsibilities include:

- Establishing the health and safety program
- Conducting an annual review in ____ (month) of each year
- Training supervisors
- Providing a safe and healthy work environment

Supervisor's responsibilities include:

- Providing a health and safety orientation to new workers
- Providing ongoing training to workers
- Taking part in inspections and investigations
- Reporting any safety or health hazards
- Correcting unsafe acts and conditions

Worker's responsibilities include:

- Learning and following safe work procedures
- Correcting hazards or reporting them to supervisors
- Participating in inspections and investigations where appropriate
- Using personal protective equipment where required
- Helping to create a safe workplace by recommending ways to improve the health and safety program

Inspection checklist and report

The following inspection checklist is provided to help guide the process of regular workplace health and safety inspections. The template is a guideline only, outlining the most common areas of focus for a workplace safety inspection. The template can be customized to meet the needs of each workplace. For additional samples, search for “inspection checklists” on [worksafebc.com](https://www.worksafebc.com).

Note that these general safety inspections do not replace the regular pre-use and scheduled inspections required for certain types of tools and equipment.

Inspection checklist (template)

Inspection completed by: _____

Date and time: _____

For any item identified as deficient (N), use the **Inspection report** at the end of this checklist to document details of the problem and recommended action.

A. Facilities and equipment		Y	N	n/a
Emergency equipment and procedures				
1	Equipment present and working:			
2	• Fire extinguishers			
3	• Fire detection & suppression systems			
4	• First aid kits			
5	• Eye wash stations			
6	• Emergency lighting			
7	• Alarms			
8	Escape routes and muster points signed			
9	Emergency procedures signed			
10	Emergency contact information posted			
11	Emergency drill performed in last 12 months			

A. Facilities and equipment		Y	N	n/a
Floors, walkways, and stairways				
12	Well-lit			
13	No blind corners			
14	Free of tripping hazards (e.g., clutter, damaged mats, uneven flooring, uncovered cables)			
15	Dry, clean, and free of slipping hazards			
16	Railings and guardrails in place and secure			
Entrances and parking lots				
17	Well-lit			
18	Clear of obstructions			
19	Entrances are secured			
20	Clear signage in parking lot (no parking, speed limits, direction of traffic, etc.)			
Shop floors and work yards				
21	Appropriate lighting for work tasks			
22	Air flow and ventilation appropriate for work tasks			
23	Piping for gas, compressed air, etc. clearly labelled			
24	Electrical control boxes have clear access			
25	Circuit breakers and starter switch clearly marked			
26	Adequate heating and cooling			
27	Safe noise levels or hearing protection provided as required			
28	Pedestrian traffic separated from vehicle traffic where practical			
Materials				
29	Stacked materials are stable (interlocked, strapped, or other means of restraint)			
30	Stacked materials are not near ignition sources			
31	Stacked materials do not obstruct sprinkler systems			

A. Facilities and equipment		Y	N	n/a
32	Containers and storage racks undamaged and appropriate for materials			
33	Hazardous materials are properly labelled			
34	Flammable and hazardous materials secured and stored in approved containers			
35	SDS available and less than three years old			
Tools and equipment				
36	Maintenance log up-to-date			
37	Inspection log up-to-date			
38	Warning signage for physical hazards created by equipment and processes			
39	Hazardous points of operation adequately guarded			
40	Safeguards in place, in good condition, and cannot be easily removed by workers			
41	Lockout procedures posted			
42	Equipment positioned to avoid endangering other workers			
43	Workers protected from materials ejected from tools or equipment			
44	Equipment controls clearly labelled and within easy reach, but protected from inadvertent activation			
45	Defective tools and equipment tagged and removed from service			
46	PPE available as required for all workers			
Ladders				
47	Ladders are appropriate for the work task			
48	Ladders are in good condition with no obvious signs of wear and tear			
Mobile equipment				
49	Maintenance logs up-to-date			
50	Pre-use inspection logs up-to-date			
51	Operators are trained			

A. Facilities and equipment		Y	N	n/a
Vehicles				
52	Maintenance logs up-to-date			
53	Inspection logs up-to-date			
Other areas of focus				
54	Problems identified in previous inspection(s):			
55	Priority areas as defined by the joint committee:			
B. Workplace practices		Y	N	n/a
Work practices — general				
56	Workers trained for specific work tasks			
57	Workers supervised for work tasks			
58	Tools used for their designed purposes only			
Personal protective equipment (PPE)				
59	Workers are trained in correct PPE use			
60	Used consistently and correctly			
61	Maintained in good working order			
62	Inspected and replaced on schedule			
Ladder use				
63	Workers not required to carry materials up and down ladders			
64	Ladders are used only for non-routine activities completed in 15 minutes or less			
65	Fall protection used when required			
66	3-point contact maintained			
Slipping and tripping avoidance				
67	Handrails are used			
68	Spills cleaned immediately			
69	Well-fitting, non-slip footwear worn			

B. Workplace practices		Y	N	n/a
Ergonomics				
70	Available assistive equipment and/or mechanical aids used			
71	Tasks are varied or rotated to minimize repetitive movement			
72	Loads assessed before lifting or pulling			
73	Loads maintained close to body			
74	Lifting with legs			
75	Upper body kept erect			
76	Natural reaching without having to over-extend			
77	Work stations and seating at proper height			
Safe work practices for high-risk work conform to regulatory requirements and are followed for:				
78	Working at elevation			
79	Asbestos exposure			
80	Exposure to hazardous materials			
81	Working in excavations			
82	Entry into confined space			
83	Working near combustible dust			
84	Hand falling or bucking			
85	Use of explosives, or flammable or combustible materials			
86	De-energization, lockout, and safeguarding			
87	Exposure to violence			
Other areas of focus				
88	Problems identified in previous inspection(s):			
89	Priority areas as defined by the joint committee:			

Inspection report

Item #	Description of hazard: (specific location and/or equipment, nature of hazard)	
Recommended action: (detailed action, taking account of hierarchy of controls, two or more options where appropriate)		
Person responsible:		Target date:
Item #	Description of hazard: (specific location and/or equipment, nature of hazard)	
Recommended action: (detailed action, taking account of hierarchy of controls, two or more options where appropriate)		
Person responsible:		Target date:
Item #	Description of hazard: (specific location and/or equipment, nature of hazard)	
Recommended action: (detailed action, taking account of hierarchy of controls, two or more options where appropriate)		
Person responsible:		Target date:
Report reviewed by: (senior management)		Date:
Comments:		

Sample safe work procedure: Handling garbage safely

The following example is intended to help you develop safe work procedures that apply to the specific situations in your workplace. Information to include in safe work procedures:

- The normal sequence of events and actions required to perform the work safely
- Any hazards involved in performing the work, such as hazardous chemicals or equipment and tools with potential hazards, and ways to eliminate or minimize the risks
- Personal protective equipment required

Handling garbage safely

Follow these procedures to prevent contact with sharp objects (such as needles and broken glass) and other items improperly discarded in garbage:

- Handle garbage as little as possible.
- Use waterproof garbage bags.
- Be alert. If possible, look for sharp objects sticking out of the bags. Listen for broken glass when you move the bag.
- Don't compress garbage or reach into garbage containers with your bare hands.
- Don't use your bare hands to pick up garbage that has spilled out of an overflowing container. Wear puncture-resistant and liquid-resistant gloves (the type worn by firefighters) or use other tools designed for picking up garbage.
- Don't let garbage bags get too full, if possible. Leave enough free space at the top of the bag so that when you grab it, you grab the top of the bag only, not any of the contents. You may have to change bags more often to prevent them from getting too full. This will also make them lighter, and easier to hold away from your body.
- Hold garbage bags by the top of the bag, away from your body. Don't hold garbage bags against your body.
- Don't place one hand under the bag to support it.

Sample supervisor training checklist

Use this checklist when training supervisors in their health and safety responsibilities. Adapt the checklist for your workplace.

Supervisor name:

Date of training:

Person providing orientation (name and position):

Annual review date:

Topic	Initials		Comments
	Trainer	Supervisor	
Supervisor health and safety responsibilities (see section 117 of the <i>Workers Compensation Act</i>)			
Company health and safety rules			
Unsafe conditions — how to report them and to whom			
Right of workers to refuse unsafe work (section 3.12 of the Regulation)			
Personal protective equipment — making sure it is available to and used by workers, and that it is properly cleaned, inspected, maintained, and stored (section 8.8 of the Regulation)			
How to supervise new, young, and regular workers in the safe performance of their jobs			
How to take corrective action when workers do not follow safe work procedures			
Workplace inspections — how and when to conduct them			
Hazard identification and risk assessment			
First aid — name of first aid attendant and locations of first aid kits and eyewash facilities			

Topic	Initials		Comments
	Trainer	Supervisor	
Reporting injuries — how to report them and how to respond to a report from a worker			
Incident investigations — how and when to conduct them			
Safe work procedures — how and when to develop them			
Worker instruction and training — when and how to conduct the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation • Instruction and training • Crew talks 			
Records — how to document worker instruction, training, and supervision			
Emergency procedures reviewed (be specific): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) b) c) 			
Review of written safe work procedures used by workers being supervised (be specific): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) b) c) 			
Other topics covered (be specific): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) b) c) 			

Quick facts for supervisors

- Supervisors have the right to refuse to direct workers to perform work they consider unsafe.
- Workers must not be disciplined for refusing to perform a task they have reasonable cause to believe is dangerous.
- Employers and supervisors must immediately investigate observed unsafe acts and conditions that are reported by workers, and make sure that such acts or conditions are remedied without delay.

Notes

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