

# Joint Health and Safety Committees

## Frequently asked questions

### When do I need a joint health and safety committee?

If your workplace has 20 or more workers, you need a joint committee. This includes any workplace where there are 20 or more workers employed at the workplace for longer than a month. WorkSafeBC may also order that a joint committee be established in any other workplace.

If your workplace has more than 9 but fewer than 20 workers, you need to have a worker health and safety representative. The worker health and safety representative has the same duties and functions as a joint committee, to the extent that is practicable.

### Who should be on the joint committee?

A joint committee must have at least four members, and at least half of the members must be worker representatives. For the purpose of a joint committee, a worker representative must be someone who does not exercise managerial functions. Managerial functions generally relate to the overall direction at the workplace and may include disciplining workers and representing management in labour relations matters.

Worker representatives must be selected as follows:

1. According to procedures established by the union, if the workers are unionized
2. By secret ballot, if the workers are not unionized
3. If some workers are unionized and some are not, then worker representatives must be selected using the above methods, in equal proportion to the number of unionized and non-unionized workers, and according to the relative risks to health and safety
4. If workers do not make their own selection, the employer must seek out and assign worker representatives

Employer representatives must be selected by the employer, and, to the extent possible, must include people who exercise managerial functions at the workplace covered by the joint committee. The owner of the business can act as an employer representative.

### Do committee members need special training?

Starting April 3, 2017, all new joint committee members must 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, and how to make regular inspections

- The requirements around responding to a refusal of unsafe work
- The requirements for annually evaluating the joint committee

## How do I set up a committee?

The first step is selecting your worker and employer representatives, and providing them with the necessary training and instruction. The newly formed committee must then establish its own rules of procedure, sometimes called terms of reference. These rules must set out how the committee will perform its duties and functions.

A sample joint committee rules of procedure template is available online at [worksafebc.com](https://worksafebc.com), under [Joint health & safety committee resources](#).

## How often should the committee meet?

The committee must meet regularly, at least once each month.

## What exactly does the joint committee do?

The joint committee plays an important role in your occupational health and safety program, giving workers and employers a way to work together to identify and find solutions to workplace health and safety issues.

The joint committee has to do the following specific duties and functions:

- Identify situations that may be unhealthy or unsafe for workers, and advise on effective systems for responding to those situations
- Consider, and promptly deal with complaints relating to the health and safety of workers
- Consult with workers and the employer on issues related to occupational health and safety, and the occupational environment
- Make recommendations to the employer and the workers for the improvement of the occupational health and safety, and the occupational environment of workers
- Make recommendations to the employer on educational programs promoting the health and safety of workers and compliance with the OHS provisions of the *Workers Compensation Act* and the regulations, and to monitor their effectiveness
- Advise the employer on programs and policies required under the regulations for the workplace, and to monitor their effectiveness
- Advise the employer on proposed changes to the workplace, including significant proposed changes to equipment and machinery, or the work processes that may affect the health or safety of workers
- Ensure that accident investigations and regular inspections are carried out as required
- Participate in inspections, investigations and inquiries as provided in Part 2 of the *Workers Compensation Act* and Part 3 of the Regulation

## What is the joint committee's role in regular workplace inspections?

A workplace inspection must, where feasible, include the participation of members of the joint committee.

As an employer, you must ensure that there are regular inspections at all workplaces, including buildings, structures, grounds, excavations, tools, equipment, machinery, and work methods and practices. These inspections must take place at intervals that will prevent the development of unsafe working conditions.

## What is the committee's role in investigating workplace incidents?

As an employer, you must undertake a preliminary and full investigation of specified workplace incidents. If they are reasonably available, the employer, a representative of the employer, and a worker representative, must participate in preliminary and full incident investigations.

For the purposes of section 70 of the Act, participation in the employer's incident investigation includes:

- Viewing the scene of the incident with the persons carrying out the investigation
- Providing advice respecting the methods used to carry out the investigation, the scope of the investigation, or any other aspect of the investigation
- Assisting the persons carrying out the investigation with:
  - Gathering information relating to the investigation
  - Analyzing the information gathered during the investigation
  - Identifying any corrective actions necessary to prevent recurrence of similar incidents

The role of the worker representative in the employer's incident investigation is to advise, assist and witness the investigation. The person conducting the investigation must be knowledgeable about the type of work involved, and is ultimately responsible for the investigation. A worker representative may support the investigator by providing a different perspective and insight into the nature of the work and the work environment.

The full employer incident investigation report (EIIR) form must be completed and submitted to WorkSafeBC within 30 days of the incident. You can submit full investigation reports in the following ways:

- Online at the [EIIR upload portal](#)
- By fax to 604.276.3247 in the Lower Mainland or toll-free 1.866.240.1434
- By mail to WorkSafeBC, PO Box 5350 Stn Terminal, Vancouver, BC V6B 5L5

More information is available at [worksafebc.com](https://www.worksafebc.com).