

# Health & Safety at Work



**Prevention Starts Here**

Worker Health and  
Safety Awareness  
in 4 Steps

This workbook belongs to:

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Ontario

# Step 1: Get on Board

## Everyone has a role in safety

A new job is a chance for a fresh start. You're learning new skills and meeting new people. But every job has hazards, no matter how safe it looks. Studies show that new and young workers in Ontario are four times more likely to get hurt during their first month on the job than at any other time.

## How the Occupational Health and Safety Act Works

**The OHS Act is a set of laws that spells out the duties of employers, supervisors and the rights and duties of workers.** There are also different regulations that are attached to the OHS Act. They contain more detailed laws about how to make the workplace safe in specific situations.

These include training, warning labels on products and information sheets. There are also regulations for different types of workplaces. The whole point of the OHS Act and Regulations is to keep workers from getting hurt or sick on the job.

## The OHS Act gives everyone in the workplace duties. These duties are connected to the level of authority each person has in the workplace.

To sort out all the duties in a workplace, the OHS Act breaks them down to three main levels of authority:

1. The employer (who is in charge of everyone).
2. The supervisor.
3. The worker (you).

## It is important for your safety that you understand everyone's health and safety duties.

## Duties of the Employer

Here are some of the things the OHS Act says every employer has to do as part of their job:

1. Make sure workers know about hazards and dangers in the workplace and how to work safely.
2. Make sure every supervisor knows how to take care of health and safety on the job.
3. Create health and safety policies and procedures for the workplace.
4. Make sure everyone knows and follows the health and safety procedures.
5. Make sure workers wear and use the right protective equipment.
6. Do everything reasonable to keep workers from getting hurt or sick on the job.

## Duties of the Worker

Now here are some of the things the OHS Act says every worker has to do as part of their job:

1. Follow the law and the workplace health and safety policies and procedures.
2. Always wear or use the protective equipment that the employer requires.
3. Work and act in a way that won't hurt them or any other worker.
4. Report any hazard they find in the workplace to their supervisor.

The Act says that your supervisor and your employer have to "take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for your protection" That means they have to do everything that is reasonable to protect you on the job.

## Rights of the Worker

You have the right under the OHS Act to be told about the hazards in the work you do and to be instructed on how to do your work safely.

If someone asks you to do work that you don't know enough about, you have the right to speak up and ask questions. People can get hurt on the job if they don't have the right information and training. You should never have to be worried that you will get in trouble for asking questions or reporting a problem. It's against the law for your employer or your supervisor to punish you in any way for doing what the OHS Act says or for asking your employer or supervisor to do what the OHS Act expects them to do. This is called a "reprisal". It's even against the law for your supervisor or employer to threaten to punish or fire you for doing these things.

You also have a right to refuse to do unsafe work if you have reason to believe it puts you or a fellow worker in danger.

# Step 2: Get in the Know

## You need to know about hazards:

**A hazard is anything in the workplace that could hurt you or the people you work with.**

### Some Common Workplace Hazards

1. Repeating the same movements over and over, especially if you are in an awkward position or you use a lot of force.
2. Slipping, tripping or falling.
3. Working near motorized vehicles.
4. Using or working near machinery.
5. Workplace violence.

It's the employer's duty to make sure that the supervisor knows enough and has enough experience and training to keep workers safe and healthy while they work. It's the employers and supervisor's duty to inform workers of health and safety hazards. It's the worker's duty to report hazards they know of to the supervisor or employer as soon as possible so they can fix it. Employers', supervisors' and workers' work together to make the workplace safer.

### Protecting you from Hazards

There are many ways that your employer can protect you from workplace hazards. The best way is to get rid of or eliminate the hazard completely. If the hazard can't be eliminated, your employer can try to reduce the hazard.

Another way to reduce hazards is to reduce how long or how often you come in contact with the hazard. This can be done by arranging the work differently so that you are not exposed as long. These are called "administrative or work practice controls." If the hazard still exists after trying to control it through elimination, engineering controls and administrative or work practice controls, your employer may require you to use protective equipment and/or protective devices.

### Protective Equipment and Devices

**The OHSA says that one of your duties as a worker is always to wear or use the protective equipment that your employer requires.**

You may think that a hardhat, safety glasses, steel-toed boots or some other protective clothing or equipment are uncomfortable or slow you down. But if the OHSA or your employer says you have to wear or use these things to do the work, you have to.

Some of the machinery in your workplace may have a guard. The guard protects you from coming in contact with a moving part. If your employer or one of the OHS Regulations says that the guard has to be used,

it has to be used. **The OHSA says that you must never remove or disable any protective device that is required.** If the device has to come off for any reason, you should not use the equipment without a replacement device. Taking shortcuts by removing guards is unsafe – and it's against the law.

**The OHSA says you have to make sure you don't use any equipment or machine in a way that could hurt you or any other worker.** You also can't act or behave in a way that could hurt you or anyone else. That means no playing games, pranks or acting in other ways that could hurt someone.

### Other ways to find out about hazards

There are other ways you can find out about hazards in your workplace. Your employer may have some of the workplace health and safety procedures in writing. These procedures are about the work you do and the machines and equipment you use. Your employer has to make sure that you know and understand them when you start work. Your employer is also responsible for making sure the procedures are followed by everyone.

**The law says every worker has to have information and training about chemicals or hazardous materials in the workplace.** The Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) Regulation says that you need to receive information and instruction on how to use, store and get rid of hazardous materials safely. This information is available on warning labels and information sheets.

**If your job involves using equipment, your employer and supervisor must instruct you on how to operate that equipment safely.** One way to get information on the safe use of machinery is from the operator's manual. It tells you about hazards and has instructions on how to use the equipment safely. Your employer should make sure anyone can check the manual available for the equipment you are using, you should ask your supervisor for information on how to operate the equipment safely. **Another important way that you can learn about hazards is through training.** Sometimes your employer will give you the training at your workplace; sometimes you will be sent somewhere else for training. Your employer also has to tell you how and where to get first aid, and what to do in an emergency. In a safe and healthy workplace, everyone knows about hazards. If you see a hazard on the job or a "close call," report it to your supervisor or employer right away. That way, someone who knows how to fix it can deal with it so that no one gets hurt. "Prevention Starts Here" when everyone knows about hazards.

# Step 3: Get Involved

## Working together for safety

Understanding the Occupational Health and Safety Act is all about knowing the health and safety duties of employers, supervisors and the duties and rights of workers, and putting them into action. We all have to get involved.

If an employer knows about a hazard and doesn't try to eliminate or reduce it, or make sure the workers are told about it and how to deal with it, that employer is not doing what the law requires.

If a supervisor knows about a hazard and doesn't report it to the supervisor or the employer, that worker is not doing what the law requires.

**If you see a hazard on the job, you have a duty to speak up.** This includes reporting equipment that isn't working right, and any other hazards that may be present as a result of not following the OHS Act or Regulations. It's important that you report to your supervisor or employer any injury, incident or close call, so that they can prevent those kinds of things from happening again in the future.

## Here are four good ways to get involved in keeping your workplace safe:

1. You can ask questions when you're not sure about something.
2. You can volunteer to become a worker health and safety representative or a worker member of the joint health and safety committee.
3. You can help your health and safety representative or joint health and safety committee with health and safety inspections by pointing out possible hazards in your work area.
4. You can take your health and safety training seriously and put what you learn into practice in your job.

## Health and safety representatives and joint health and safety committees

The OHS Act says that workplaces with 6 to 19 workers need to have a health and safety representative or a joint health and safety committee. In most larger workplaces with 20 or more workers, the OHS Act says a joint health and safety committee has to be set up.

Committees have to have at least two people on them; the workers or their union, if any, pick one of them and the employer picks the other. In workplaces where there are 50 or more workers, the committee must have at least four members, and at least half of the members have to

represent workers.

The committee plays an important role in helping to keep workplaces safe through - inspections and recommendations for improvement to employer.

## What to look for and what to ask

**The OHS Act says that your employer must post the OHS Act and other health and safety information in your workplace, such as an occupational health and safety poster.** Look for the posted names of your health and safety representative or joint health and safety committee members – these are people you can talk to if you need help.

If you can't find any of this information in your workplace, talk to your supervisor about it. Health and safety is an important part of his or her job. You can also talk to the people you work with and benefit from each other's experience.

## Always be on the lookout for hazards to yourself or others. Before you start your work day, ask yourself questions like:

- Is any of the machinery broken?
- Are there warning labels or signs?
- Is there any moving equipment I could get caught in?
- Is there something I could slip or trip on?
- Do I need protective equipment?
- Do I know how to do this job safely?

# Step 4: Get More Help

## You are not alone

If you see something unsafe that could hurt someone, you need to report it to your supervisor or your employer. It's also a good idea to tell your health and safety representative or committee if there is one. But if the employer or supervisor doesn't fix the problem, you can call the Ministry of Labour.

The Ministry's job is to help prevent workplace injuries and illnesses through enforcing the OHS. They want to know if there are problems that aren't being fixed.

Ministry of Labour inspectors can't be in all workplaces at all times. But the Ministry wants to hear if there's a problem on the job that isn't fixed anywhere in Ontario. So it has a toll – free number that you can call. Calling that number connects you to Health and Safety Contact Centre that takes calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you don't want to give your name when you call the Health and Safety Contact Centre, you don't have to. Here is the number:

**1-877-202-0008**

It's against the law for your employer or your supervisor to fire or punish you for doing what the OHS expects you to do, or because you asked them to do what the OHS expects them to do. It's even against the law for your employer or supervisor to threaten to fire or punish you for these things. The OHS is very clear on this.

**If you feel that your employer is taking action against you for raising a health and safety concern, you can discuss it with your staffing representative.**

## The right to refuse unsafe work

If you have reason to believe that the work you are doing or the equipment you are using might hurt you or someone you work with, you can refuse to do that work. This means that you tell your employer or supervisor (and your health and safety representative or committee) that you think you are in danger and you are not going to do the work. You need to tell them why.

**All workers have the right to refuse work if they have reason to believe it's dangerous.**

It's important to know that you can also refuse work if you have reason to believe that the area where you are working is likely to

endanger you or any other worker, or that you are in danger from workplace violence. Talk to your supervisor if you feel you are in danger.

## More information and resources

Ontario has a health and safety "system" which includes the following partners:

### Ministry of Labour

Develops, communicates and enforces occupational health and safety requirements and employment standards. Develops, coordinates and implements strategies to prevent workplace injuries and illnesses and can set standards for health and safety training.

1-877-202-0008

[www.labour.gov.on.ca](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca)

### Workers Health & Safety Centre

An occupational health and safety training centre for workers, representatives and employers.

1-888-869-7950

[www.whsc.on.ca](http://www.whsc.on.ca)

### Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers

Six medical clinics located across Ontario that provide occupational health services and information.

1-877-817-0336

[www.ohcow.on.ca](http://www.ohcow.on.ca)

### Health & Safety Ontario

Four health and safety associations that provide sector specific consulting, training, products and services.

[www.healthandsafetyontario.ca](http://www.healthandsafetyontario.ca)

## **Call the Ministry of Labour at 1-877-202-0008**

Report critical injuries, fatalities, work refusals anytime.

Workplace health and safety information,  
weekdays 8:30am – 5:00pm.

Emergency? Always call 911 immediately.

**Find out more:**  
**[www.ontario.ca/healthandsafetyatwork](http://www.ontario.ca/healthandsafetyatwork)**

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