

# Worker Health and Safety Awareness in 4 Steps

Health & Safety  
at Work  
Prevention Starts Here

## STEP 1: GET ON BOARD

- Everyone has a Role in Safety
- How the *Occupational Health & Safety Act Works*
- Duties of the Employer
- Duties of the Supervisor
- Duties of the Worker
- Rights of the Worker

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### Health & Safety at Work - Prevention Starts Here

#### Worker Health and Safety Awareness in 4 Steps

*Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) explains the rights, responsibilities of all parties: employers, supervisor & workers.*

*These are things you need to know and understand.*

*Then you can always be safe at work.*

Everyone in the workplace, from the employer to the newest worker, has different but important duties to keep the workplace safe.

Because employers have the most authority in the workplace, they have the greatest responsibility but it's important for your own safety that you understand everyone's health and safety duties, including yours.

Preventing injuries and illnesses at work starts here, but it doesn't end here. One of your employer's duties under the OHSA is to give you specific information and instructions about how to stay safe on your job. What you learn from this program will help you understand the instructions. We hope you will use what you learn in your working life.



## 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.

The number of people in Ontario who suffer a work-related illness or injury each year would fill the seats of a dozen big hockey arenas.

**Who do you think is more likely to get hurt and/or sick on the job?**

New and young workers  
OR  
Experienced and older workers

## Answer: New and Young Workers

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.

That's because:

- They often aren't told about or don't understand the hazards of the job
- They don't know what to expect from their employer, their supervisor and of themselves
- Sometimes they aren't sure what questions to ask
- Sometimes they don't even know who to ask

That's where the law comes in



## How the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* works

The OHSA is a set of laws that spells out:

- the duties of employers,
- the duties of supervisors
- the rights and duties of workers

There are also different Regulations that are attached to the OHSA. They contain more detailed laws about how to make the workplace safe in specific situations.

For example, several Regulations explain what is needed to work safely with chemicals and other hazardous materials. This includes training, warning labels on products and information sheets. There are also Regulations for different types of work places, such as construction projects, health care facilities, industrial establishments and mines.

***The whole point of the OHSA and Regulations is to keep workers from getting hurt or sick on the job.*** There are inspectors from the Ministry of Labor who verify the laws are followed and may issue orders or lay charges if they aren't. If a person is convicted of breaking the law, there are penalties such as fines or time in prison.

The OHSA 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 OHSA breaks them down to three main levels of authority:

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

? To which of these three people do you think the OHSA gives the most duties?

? To which of these three people do you think the OHSA gives the most duties?

The right answer is #1 - The employer

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

The more authority a person has in the workplace, the more health and safety duties they have. It's important for your safety that you understand everyone's health and safety duties.



## Duties of the Employer



The OHSA says every employer has to do the following as part of their job:

1. Verify workers know about hazards + dangers at work, how to work safely
2. Make sure supervisors know 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 Supervisor

The OHSA says every supervisor must do the following as part of their job:

1. Inform workers of hazards and dangers in the workplace while showing them how to work safely
2. Make sure workers follow the law and the workplace health and safety policies and procedures
3. Make sure workers wear and use the right protective equipment
4. Do everything reasonable to prevent workers from getting hurt or sick on the job

Suppose you have been asked to do something that you don't know very much about. What should your employer and your supervisor do to make sure you are able to do it safely?

The people who made the OHSA thought about that question, too.

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 at work.

## Duties of the worker

The OHSA says every worker must do the following as part of their job:

1. Follow the law & the workplace health & 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

## Rights of the worker

Your employer has the responsibility to make the work place as safe as possible & to tell you about any hazards in the work you do. Your supervisor has the same duty.

They also have to make sure you know how to avoid those dangers & work safely.

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



## Rights of the worker

If someone asks you to do work that you don't know enough about, your employer and supervisor are responsible for making sure you know how to do the work safely.

That's why you have the right to speak up and ask questions — even if you are shy or unsure.

People can get hurt or killed on the job if they don't have the correct 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 OHSA says or for asking your employer or supervisor to do what the OHSA 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. We will look at this right and your protection from reprisals in more detail later.

**"Prevention starts here" but does not end here**

## STEP 2: GET IN THE KNOW

- You Need to Know About Hazards
- Some Common Workplace Hazards
- Protecting You from Hazards
- Protective Equipment and Devices
- Other Ways to Find Out About Hazards



## Step 2: Get in the Know - You Need to Know About Hazards

People say that what you don't know can't hurt you. That's not true at work. On some jobs, what you don't know can kill you. A hazard is anything at work that could hurt you or the people you work with.

We all have heard about a worker or group of workers who were killed on the job. We have heard of workers falling from heights, getting caught in equipment or being electrocuted and burned. Events like these send a shock wave through the workplace and community, and it's a tragic loss for the victim's family and friends. Unfortunately, this kind of event happens not once or twice but dozens of times each year in Ontario.

## You Need to Know About Hazards

There is a hazard at the root of every work-related death, injury or sickness. *Hazards can take many forms. Sometimes more than one hazard can combine to make an even bigger hazard.* You need to know about the hazards in your workplace before you start working.

Think about the people you know. Do you know someone who has been hurt or killed at work? What was the hazard at the root of it? How did it affect you? How did it affect their family?



## Some Common Workplace Hazards

Common hazards in Ontario workplaces Include:



Repeating the same movements over and over, especially if you are in an awkward position or you use a lot of force

Think of someone who bends down all day, or someone who lifts heavy things over and over again, especially above the shoulders or below the knees

## Know About Hazards

You also need to think about less visible hazards related to your work, things like chemicals, fumes, and toxic dust. Or germs and viruses in labs and healthcare workplaces. Some of these hazards can make you very sick.

Sometimes they make you sick **right away(acute)**; other times you don't know that you are sick several months or even years **later(chronic)**.



## Here are several examples of smart questions to ask

- How do I report an injury?
- What do I do in an emergency?
- Does this workplace have an evacuation plan?
- Is there a Health & Safety Board? Where is it?
- Where is a First Aid kit?
- Where is a fire extinguisher(s)?
- In addition to 911, what other Emergency Numbers should I have ? Location?
- Is there an Eye wash station? Where is it?
- Where are Material Safety Data Sheets(MSDS) located?

## Know About Hazards

That's why it's important to know about these hazards now. It's the employer's duty to make sure that the supervisor has enough knowledge and has enough experience and training to keep workers safe and healthy while they work.

It's the employer's 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.



## Know About Hazards

Here are **four** important questions about your job that you need to know the answers to. If you don't know, ask your supervisor:

1. What are the hazards of this job?
2. Is there any special training needed for this job?
3. Do I have the right protective equipment for this job?
4. If I have any questions about safety, who do I ask?



## 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 (**elimination**). A good example is replacing a toxic cleaning chemical with one that is non-toxic.

**If the hazard can't be eliminated, your employer can try to reduce the hazard.** This can be done by reducing how much of the hazard you are exposed to. An example of this is turning up the ventilation system in a factory, or putting a barrier around a dangerous piece of equipment. These are called "**engineering controls**."



## Protecting You From Hazards

**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 **personal protective equipment(PPE)** and/or protective devices, such as *eye glasses, hearing protection, face shields, steel toed footwear, gloves, type-specific aprons, type-specific respiratory masks.*

## Protective Equipment & Devices

The OSHA 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 OSHA or your employer says you have to wear or use these things to do the work, you have to!



## Protective Equipment & Devices

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 illegal.**

The OHSA says you must 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.

## Protective Equipment & Devices

**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.



**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
- 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*



**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 any one can check the manual if they need information. If there is no manual available for the equipment you are using, you should ask your supervisor for information on how to operate the equipment safely.

## STEP 3: GET INVOLVED

- Working Together for Safety
- The Right to Participate in Health and Safety
- Health and Safety Reps and Joint Health & Safety Committees
- What to Look For and What to Ask
- Be a Safety Role Model



## Step 3: Get Involved - Working Together for Safety

Understanding the Occupational H&S Act is about knowing the health and safety duties of employers, supervisors and workers. It's also about the rights of workers. We all have to get involved. All of this must be addressed.

If an *employer* knows about a hazard and doesn't try to eliminate or reduce it, and doesn't tell workers about it, the employer is not doing what the law requires.

If a *supervisor* knows about a hazard and doesn't explain to workers how to deal with it, that supervisor is not doing what the law requires. If a *worker* 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 OHSA 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.



## The Right to Participate in Health and Safety

The OHSA gives you the right to participate and get involved in keeping your workplace safe and healthy. There are many ways you can do this.

Can you think of three?

Here are *four good ways to get involved* in keeping your workplace safe, but there are many more:

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 & Joint Health and Safety Committees

The OHSA says that workplaces with **6 to 19 workers** need to have a health and safety representative or a joint health and safety committee.

In workplaces with **20 or more workers**, the OHSA says a joint health and safety committee has to be set up. **Committees need have minimum two certified people on them (one worker representative & one representing Management).**

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.

**This committee plays an important role in helping to keep workplaces safe.**

For example, a member of the committee who represents workers must regularly inspect the workplace. Information from these inspections is brought back to the committee. The committee then makes recommendations to the employer to improve health & safety. The employer has to respond to these recommendations within a short period of time. Because there is an employer and a worker member of the committee, everyone has a say in identifying and solving problems.



The committee plays an important role in helping to keep workplaces safe.

**In smaller workplaces, the health and safety representative has many of the same roles as a committee.** They help to improve health and safety at work.

They do this by inspecting the workplace often (monthly is common). If a problem is found, they make recommendations to the employer about how to fix it. Workplace inspections are always documented on paper with details described.

## What to Look for and What to Ask

**The OHSA says that your employer must post the OHSA and other health and safety information in your workplace, such as an occupational health and safety poster.**

Look for the posted names of your H&S representative or Joint Health and Safety Committee members – these are people you can talk to if you need help. And if your workplace has more than 5 workers, your employer has to post the company health and safety policy.

*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?
- Do I see machines and/or tools missing their safety guarding?
- Are there warning labels or signs? Any missing?
- Is there any moving equipment I could get caught in?
- Is there something I could slip or trip on?
- Is there anything piled up too high at my work, that could fall?
- Are there any lights burned out anywhere?
- Are there any emergency exits blocked with materials?  
(red or green signs)

## **Always be on the lookout for hazards to yourself or others**

Before you start your work day, ask yourself questions like:

- Do I need protective equipment? Where to get it? Have I been trained about it?
- Do I know how to do this job safely? Are there written instructions anywhere?
- Can I get hurt trying to work by myself (ask for help, say for lifting)?
- Could my work activities hurt others, without meaning to?

Have I reviewed the proper procedures describing how to do my job?

## Be a Safety Role Model

Workers should be able to look to their supervisors as good health and safety role models. Co-workers may also look at you as a role model for good health and safety practices.

**How you work, and the way you think and talk about the work, can affect the safety of the people you work with. Be another person who does the right thing, others will learn from it. The message you want others to get from you is:**

***"Prevention starts here"***



## STEP 4: GET MORE HELP

- You Are Not Alone
- The Right to Refuse Unsafe Work
- More Information and Resources

## Step 4: Get More Help - You are not alone

It's a sad fact that in some workplaces, nobody pays much attention to safety. In those workplaces, it's all about doing the work as quickly as possible. If someone questions the way things are being done, they may get a dirty look but nothing is done to make things safer.

People in workplaces like that are often afraid to do anything about it because they don't want to get fired. So they keep quiet.

***That is the type of workplace where people get injured or killed!***

Maybe you felt that way on a past job. That's why it's important to know that you are not alone.

Help is always available from outside the workplace.



If you see something unsafe that could hurt someone, **you need to report it to your supervisor or your employer right away.** 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(MOL). **The job of the MOL is to help prevent workplace injuries & illnesses through enforcing the OHSA.** They want to know about 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 the Health and Safety Contact Centre that takes calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

You don't have to give your name when you call the Health and Safety Contact Centre, here is the number:

**1-877-202-0008**



Remember we mentioned reprisals before?

**It's against the law for your employer or your supervisor to fire or punish you for doing what the OHSA expects you to do, or because you asked them to do what the OHSA 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 OHSA is very clear on this**



**The Office of the Worker Adviser** also provides free advice & representation to non-unionized workers who are in this situation. You can call their toll-free number for help:

**1-855-659-7744**

If you feel that your employer is taking action against you for raising a health & safety concern, you can discuss it with a union official if you are a union member, or bring a complaint to the *Ontario Labor Relations Board*.

## **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.***

## The Right to Refuse Unsafe Work

***You must report the situation to your supervisor or employer, and should also contact your health and safety representative or committee.*** Most of the time, your supervisor or employer and your safety representative or committee member will be able to solve the problem.

If the problem isn't fixed or you still have reason to believe the work is unsafe, you can continue to refuse the work. A Ministry of Labour inspector will then be called in to investigate.

**Some workers, such as nurses, firefighters and police officers cannot refuse work if the danger is a normal part of their job or if refusing work would put someone else in danger.**

Talk to your union, other workplace H&S representatives, supervisor or employer if you think your right to refuse work may be limited by the work you do.

## More Information and Resources for YOU

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. They develop, coordinate and implement 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 H&S associations that provide sector specific consulting, training, products and services.

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

**Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (I.H.S.A.)** Serves electrical, construction and transportation sectors.

1-800-263-5024

**Public Services Health and Safety Association** – Serves Health, Education and Municipal sectors.

1-877-250-7444

**Workplace Safety North** – Serves mining, pulp and paper, forestry sectors.

1-888-730-7821

**Workplace Safety and Prevention Services** – Serves industrial, farming and service sectors.

1-877-494-9777



### Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)

Administers Ontario's no-fault workplace insurance for employers and their workers.

1-800-387-0750

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

The system is there to serve everyone in the workplace employers, supervisors and workers.

Another place you can go for information is the [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety](#). They have information and fact sheets on their website. If you are having trouble finding information, you can ask questions by telephone at

1-800-668-4284

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

***"Prevention Starts Here" but it doesn't end here***

## Ontario's Health and Safety System Partners

To help you understand how Ontario's workplace health and safety system works together to help create healthier and safer workplaces, think about which organization has which purpose.

### ORGANIZATION

### OBJECTIVE

Ministry of Labour	➡	Health & Safety Training
Health & Safety Ontario	➡	Enforces the OHSA
Workplace Safety & Insurance Board	➡	Medical clinics for injured or sick workers
Workers Health & Safety Center	➡	Insurance benefits for injured or sick workers
Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers	➡	Occupational H&S consulting training, products and services

## What's Next

Now that you have completed this general awareness program, you are ready to be given more specific information and instruction by your employer, supervisor as required by the OHSA. You should hear about:

- Specific hazards in your workplace
- The procedure to follow when reporting H&S concerns, incidents or injuries
- Any protective equipment you are required to wear or use
- Location of H&S Policy at work (companies with more than 5 workers)
- Where the first aid station is and the names of qualified first aid providers
- The company's emergency plan
- Information on hazardous materials in your workplace
- The workplace violence and harassment prevention policy
- Where a copy of the OHSA is posted
- Where the names of your joint health and safety committee members are posted

We hope this program has been useful and that you'll use the information in your day-to-day work. Knowing your health and safety rights and duties, and the duties of your supervisor and employer, is an important first step in staying safe on the job.

**Remember that when it comes to your health and safety, there is no such thing as a silly question.**

**That question could save your life—so ask it.**