



Small business: Understanding your health and safety requirements

Key responsibilities for Ontario employers

Many small business owners may be surprised to learn they have the same basic health and safety responsibilities as larger employers under Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA).

Understanding how these responsibilities apply in practice can be challenging, especially for smaller workplaces that may not have dedicated health and safety staff or resources.

Key health and safety responsibilities for small businesses:

1. Establish clear roles and responsibilities

Small businesses need to make sure everyone understands their role in health and safety:

- Employers must ensure the workplace is safe
- Supervisors must guide and correct unsafe work
- Workers must follow safe practices and speak up about hazards

2. Post and communicate key information

Workplaces must keep important safety information visible and accessible, including:

- The Occupational Health and Safety Act and key safety posters
- Workplace health and safety policies
- Violence and harassment prevention policies
- WSIB injury reporting information and emergency contacts
- Names of health and safety committee members (if required)

3. Maintain written policies and a basic safety program

Businesses are expected to:

- Maintain a health and safety policy (reviewed regularly)
- Support policies with practical procedures (training, inspections, emergency plans, etc.)
- Update policies as workplace needs change

4. Train and supervise workers

Employers must ensure:

- Mandatory health and safety awareness training is completed
- Workers are trained for their specific tasks and to work safely around hazards
- Workers are trained on the proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and the safe work procedures required for their job
- New and young workers receive extra support and supervision

5. Involve workers in safety

Depending on the size of the workplace, this may include:

- A health and safety representative (6–19 workers)
- A Joint Health and Safety Committee (20+ workers)
- Regular workplace inspections and feedback on hazards

6. Respond to hazards and incidents

Employers must:

- Identify and control workplace hazards
- Investigate incidents and report serious injuries when required
- Offer modified duties to support return to work

For more information, visit [health and safety resources for small business](#).