

Health, Safety & Your Job

An orientation to health and safety
at an industrial workplace.

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Starting Off on the Right Foot

This health and safety booklet was designed with you, the worker, in mind. No, it won't take the place of safety training, but it will help you understand some very important basics of health and safety.

What you're holding is a guide to some common safety issues in an industrial workplace.

With each subject you may develop questions and that's the whole idea. After you read through this booklet a few times, you will know which issues you want to learn more about.



The Act and Regulations

You might think unsafe work behaviour isn't a big deal, but the truth is new workers get hurt way more often than any other workers out there.

To help keep you safe, the **Occupational Health and Safety Act** and the regulations made under the Act set out some of the rules for health and safety for workplaces in Ontario. The Act covers general standards for all workplaces, including requirements for handling chemicals safely, who to notify in case of an incident, and ground rules for your workplace's safety committee.

You might have heard the expression **"It's not just common sense, it's the law,"** around work at one time or another. The Act is one of those laws. It spells out specific duties for each of the "workplace parties". The workplace parties are: the owners and directors, the employer (or the company), the supervisors, and, yes, you the worker.

There are also regulations for different industries. For example, forestry, the paper industry, and the mining sector all have regulations they follow in addition to the Act.

Look for the green book entitled **Occupational Health and Safety Act, and any applicable regulations** at your workplace. Your employer will have a posted copy and it's intended for reference or any questions you may have.

Where Do You Fit In?

Safety, it's everybody's business and you're probably wondering where do I, the worker, fit in? Well, you the worker have certain **rights and responsibilities**.

They are:

- The right to participate in health and safety at your workplace;
- The right to know what the workplace hazards are and to be informed if some part of your job is dangerous or hazardous to your health;
- The right to refuse unsafe work.

You also have the responsibility to follow the requirements of the Act and Regulations, to use the safety equipment and clothing required for the job, and to report any problems, hazards or violations of the Act and Regulations to your supervisor. **You also have responsibilities:**

- **Not** to do anything that compromises your own health and safety or someone else's
- **Not** to remove guards or other protective devices
- **Not** to use equipment dangerously
- **Not** to, as the Act phrases it "*engage in any prank, contest, feat of strength, unnecessary running or rough and boisterous conduct.*"

Policy and Procedure

You'll often hear the words "*policy*" and "*procedure*" used together. Policy is *what to do*. Procedure is *how you do it*.

The word **policy** refers to the general rules that your company operates by. It's company **policy** for example, to enforce the use of lockout. It's company policy that everyone must wear his or her personal protective equipment.

The word **procedure**, on the other hand, refers to a set of instructions, usually written instructions, for any given job, task or situation. For example, if there is a company policy to enforce lockout, the **procedures** are the step-by-step written instructions that tell you how to lock out a particular machine.

For any job you're given, make sure you know the policy. Then make sure you learn the procedure. Ask for the **Policy and Procedure Manual** from your supervisor to know what to do and how to do it, especially in areas where health and safety is concerned.

Training

“I’ve never done that job before. Is there anything I should know about before I start?”

That’s the smartest question you’ll ever ask whether it’s your first day on the job or whether you’re a 20-year veteran.

Proper training for every job and every task is key to your personal health and safety.

If you don’t know, don’t touch, ask!! That’s Rule #1

When you’re assigned a task, make sure the person giving you the task knows that you haven’t done it before. Even if you think you know, you actually may not. **Be 100% sure and ask!!**

Make sure the supervisor explains the job to you. Have them show you. Have them stick around while you show them. Ask questions. Ask ‘are there any hazards that I should know about that are related to this job?’ Make sure you understand.

One more thing: If you see a job that you think needs doing, but which hasn’t been assigned to you, ask your supervisor about it. There may be a reason why it hasn’t been assigned. There may be hidden dangers for you or for other people in the workplace.

Personal Protective Equipment



PPE, your personal protective equipment, was designed to keep you safe on the job.

A hard hat, boots with reinforced toe caps and safety glasses are the standard basic **PPE**. However it all depends on your area of work. In some cases you may need extra protection as well. For example, you'll need hearing protection (ear plugs or muffs) if the workplace is noisy, hand protection if you have to handle sharp or abrasive things, and face protection for shop work.

Your supervisor will tell you what you need, when and how to wear it, and how to **make sure it fits you.**

Noise

You probably know people who always seem to have the TV turned up too loud. They say ‘pardon?’ every time you say something to them, and seem to miss out on most of the conversation whenever there’s a group of people around the table. The problem is often hearing loss.

Though there are a lot of possible causes, the biggest one is **noise**. The main reason for noise-induced hearing loss is exposure to high noise levels. It’s just that simple. The louder the noise and the longer exposure, the sooner you’ll have hearing problems and the more crucial they’ll be.

Of course, you won’t notice symptoms overnight or within a day or week. But a few years down the road, you’ll be saying pardon and turning the TV volume up way too high. Ear muffs were invented for a reason, to protect your hearing.

Use Them!



Guards, Shields and Walkways

Wherever you go in the workplace, you'll notice physical barriers between you and dangerous equipment. There will be guardrails, crossovers and gates on the walkways. There will be shields and covers over moving parts, screens to control flying particles and warning signs to alert you to possible danger.

All of these things are there for one purpose only: to protect you. Your place is on the *"safe"* side of the barriers, the guards and the shields. Everything on the other side is called the *"Danger Zone."*

You never cross a barrier, lift a shield or remove a guard unless...

- 1) It's part of your job to do so for some specific purpose, and
- 2) You've been fully trained in what to do and how to do it, and
- 3) You've locked out according to the written lockout procedure.

One more thing: It's **everybody's** job to make sure that all guards and the shields are in place.

If you see one missing or damaged, report it to your supervisor right away.

Nip Points and Guarding

You're probably wondering what a nip point is.

Well, a **nip point** is where powered rollers meet, where a chain runs onto a sprocket, or where two gears come together.

Anything that touches the moving parts at the nip point gets pulled in through the rollers, around the sprocket or into the gears.

If your hand or clothing gets pulled in, the injury can be terrible or fatal. These incidents happen time and time again. That's why, by law, all nip points have to be guarded.

Nip points must have covers, shields, or other types of guarding to prevent anyone from coming into contact with their moving parts.

If you find an unguarded nip point, **report it to your supervisor immediately.**

Loose Clothing

You may love to wear a long sleeve shirt because of its dangling sleeves. But the truth is that shirt could be a hazard, a hazard that can hurt or kill you.

Loose clothing, hair or even jewelry, makes the **nip point** problem even more serious.

Avoid wearing:

- An open shirt front
- An unbuttoned cuff
- A scarf
- Dragging boot laces
- Loose hair
- Jewelry like a necklace or ring.

What could happen is that a loose sleeve or long hair can get caught in a moving part, wound up on a rotating shaft or pulled in by a rotating gear. Use caution when working with machines. It's important to wear clothes that fit properly and avoid anything like scarves that dangle or straps and cords that may come loose.

That's also why you have to keep sleeves buttoned down, boot laces up and long hair tied back or in a net.

Confined Spaces

A “*confined space*” is a place (whether it seems particularly “confined” or not) that may be or may suddenly become hazardous to your health because of the composition of the atmosphere or the possibility of being buried by material.

Confined space hazards include:

- Little or too much oxygen in the air
- Presence of a toxic gas or other material
- Presence of a vapour, gas, dust or other substance that could burn or explode
- Loose material in a bin that could slide and bury someone

Sometimes confined spaces are obvious, like the inside of a storage tank. At other times, they may be harder to identify, like sealed rooms, trenches, sewers, or inside silos, or bins.

Special procedures and training are required by law for any entry into any confined space, like testing the atmosphere, locking out any mechanical equipment and pipes or chutes, and posting qualified helpers outside the confined space in case of trouble.

Stay clear of all confined spaces. If you spot someone in trouble in one, **go and get help immediately**. Do not climb in and become the second victim of the same hazard!

Lifting and Carrying

It's very easy to hurt yourself lifting things. You can hurt yourself by lifting things that are too heavy, lifting with your back while turning at the same time or by lifting too quickly. All these actions are a way to ask for a strain, a sprain or a back injury. Chances are if you hurt your back just once, you're much more likely to hurt it again and again.

There are ways you can protect yourself:

- Lift slowly
- Hold the weight as close to your body as possible
- When you have to turn it, do it by turning your feet, not by twisting your back
- If something is too heavy for one person to lift comfortably, get someone to help
- If it's too much for two people, get the lift truck or dolly or another form of specialized equipment

The same goes for carrying loads that are awkward. If the load is too big, too long, and too hard to balance or if it blocks your vision, get help.

Housekeeping

It's not all that fun or exciting, but at a workplace, housekeeping is everybody's job all the time. It may be the single most important way to prevent slips and falls and help keep everybody safe.

Cleaning up any spills of oil, grease, water or anything else that someone could slip and fall on is proper housekeeping. It's important to clean up spills right away, safely.

Good housekeeping includes:

- Picking up tools and equipment
- Making sure piles are secure and won't fall
- Reporting any housekeeping issues so that they can be solved right away.

Slips and Falls

Slips and falls are still one of the biggest causes of incidents and injuries on the job.

To protect yourself, you have to use “defensive walking.”

The easiest way to walk “*defensively*” is to do just that: **walk**. Running, jumping, vaulting, climbing and swinging from bars belong on the track or in the gym. They don’t belong in the workplace.

Since you’re already walking, walk **on the walkways**. Use the crossovers or approved passageways to get around conveyors or material moving devices. Use the stairs. Hold the handrail. (Don’t even **think** about walking on conveyors!)

Remember your housekeeping. By cleaning up spills, removing ice build-up and keeping obstacles off the walkways, you can help prevent slips and falls both for yourself and your co-workers.

Remember to use the “**3-point contact**” method for climbing on ladders or mounting or dismounting from mobile machinery.

Finally, wearing appropriate boots with non-slip soles for indoors or a deep lug pattern if you work outdoors will give you better traction.

Mobile Equipment

Large mobile equipment like trucks, loaders and lift trucks are a fact of life in an industrial workplace and it's your job to **stay out of their way**. An industrial workplace can be noisy, making it hard for operators to hear you, and you might not hear a loader coming over all the noise.

There's also "line-of-sight" issues. Many machine operators have a very limited field of view so they might not be able to see you. And piles of material can also obstruct your view, so be aware that you may not be able to see a machine coming.

What all this means is that you have to **protect yourself**. Stay out of the area unless you have a specific job there. Keep to the walkways and safe zones. Stop, look and listen before you cross any open area where machines operate.

Most important, **observe the "Danger Zone" rule**: never approach a working machine until the operator sees you, acknowledges your presence, stops work and signals you forward.



Emergencies

Would you know what to do during an emergency at your workplace?

Your supervisor will discuss basic emergency procedures with you. You must have a good understanding of what to do, where to go, whom to call and, above all, **what not to do, in each of the following situations:**

- you are instructed to evacuate the workplace;
- you encounter a threat or occurrence of violence;
- you hear the fire alarm, find a fire or even a fire **hazard;**
- you suffer an injury or become ill;
- you find a co-worker who has suffered an injury and needs first aid or who is ill and needs help;
- you find an immediate hazard, or conditions that could cause an incident;
- you spill fuel or a solvent or some other possibly hazardous material;
- you find a spill or conditions that could lead to a spill.

Of course, the response to any problem is to take the correct action if you know it and to report the problem to your supervisor. You will want to be well informed about emergency procedures.

Reporting Incidents

You may have heard the phrase “there’s no such thing as an accident”.

The phrase means that any time something happens that causes an injury or damage, there were always **steps that could have been taken to avoid it**. For this reason, many safety people use the term “*incident*” instead of “*accident*”.

An incident could include any sort of loss such as wasted time, spoiled material, damage to equipment, or at worst an injury or fatality. It also includes the same occurrence that by sheer good luck does not result in a loss.

Workplaces need to keep track of all incidents, whether or not there is injury or damage. This helps them make sure the same incident won’t happen again.

That’s why it’s very important that you report every incident, and seek immediate first aid or medical assistance for every injury, however slight you may think it is at the time.

Your report leads to an investigation so all of the factors, conditions and background can be brought to light. That way you, your supervisor and your **safety committee** can take steps to make sure it never happens again.

WHMIS

WHMIS (*pronounced “wim-is”*) or **Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System**, is a set of rules and regulations to give you information about all of the hazardous materials like chemicals, fuels, toxic substances and so on that are present in your workplace.

Containers that hold hazardous material will have a **“WHMIS label”**. The WHMIS label will tell you what the substance is. It uses a system of eight *“hazard symbols”* to identify the specific danger. It also tells you about any special precautions you should take, what protective equipment you should use, and what to do if something goes wrong.

The **“MSDS”**, the Material Safety Data Sheet, gives you much more information about the substance. The Act requires that these sheets are stored in an easily accessible manner.

WHMIS is there for your information and your protection. Read your WHMIS labels, follow the directions and make sure you’re signed up for your employer’s next **WHMIS training session**.

H & S Committee

What's a shared responsibility between workers and management? **Safety!**

If your workplace has between five to 19 employees, in order to comply with the Act, one of you must be an elected health and safety representative.

If there are 20 or more employees, your workplace must have a Joint Health and Safety Committee. The committee plays a major role in the safety of your workplace. It's made up of an equal number of representatives from workers and management.

It's your committee, and you can get involved. You may want to attend committee meetings to find out what the **safety issues** are. You may want to make suggestions, and if you do, you can make them to the committee as a whole, or to one of the safety representatives you meet in the workplace.

If you've been on the job for a while, you may want to consider joining the committee to learn more, and to contribute to everybody's health, safety and well-being.

Certification

You may have heard about “*certification*” if your workplace has a **Joint Health and Safety Committee**.

Certification means that at least two members of the committee, one from management and one of your co-workers, have received training in health and safety.

The “*certified members*” are there to help look after the safety of everyone in the workplace.

They’re there to help you. Your certified members can answer questions about health and safety. They participate in incident investigations and play a major role in health and safety related work refusals and work stoppages.

Remember the **right to refuse** dangerous work? If you feel that the task you have been assigned is dangerous, you should talk to your supervisor. If that doesn’t solve the problem, you can call in your certified member. He or she will help resolve the issue as quickly and smoothly as possible.

Finally...

This booklet is just a beginning. There are many more health and safety issues that you'll want to learn more about. There may be dozens of issues, hazards and concerns that are specific to your industry, your workplace, and your job.

If your workplace is unionized, you'll find that your union is as interested in **health and safety** as you are. Talk to your union rep about services they offer.

Take the opportunity to learn from your supervisor and the people you work with. You'll find that most people will be more than happy to explain things to you and they will gladly share their own experiences with you.

You can also "*study up*" just by reading what is on the bulletin board, posters, notices, and the minutes from the **Joint Health and Safety Committee**.

When health and safety courses are offered in the workplace, don't miss the chance. **Sign up and get involved!**



