

Safe work permits

OHS information for work site parties

This resource provides occupational health and safety information about safe work permits in Alberta.

KEY INFORMATION

- A safe work permit is a written document used to enhance safety for certain types of work.
- Employers often use safe work permits as an important administrative hazard control if work is particularly dangerous or takes place in a dangerous location.

What is a safe work permit?

Alberta's Occupational Health and Safety Code (OHS Code) requires employers to identify any work site hazards and then eliminate or control them before work begins. For some kinds of particularly hazardous work, employers will often use safe work permits as an important administrative hazard control.

A safe work permit is a written document that typically:

- Authorizes workers to perform specific work (such as excavation work) in a specific work location (such as a trench for a specific period of time).
- Describes the hazards that will be involved and the precautions that must be taken to safely complete the work.
- Is issued by a person who is competent to evaluate the hazards of the work and has supervisory authority over the workers.

Workers are required to comply with the conditions specified on the permit and do the work only as authorized by the permit.

When might safe work permits be needed?

Some types of work are hazardous enough that a safe work permit might be needed as an administrative control of an identified hazard. Safe work permits could be considered a requirement as part of an employer's general duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their workers.

Examples of particularly hazardous work environments or materials for which safe work permits are often used include:

- Explosive atmospheres.
- Radioactive materials.
- Toxic chemicals.
- Excavations.
- High-voltage electricity.

Information to include on a safe work permit

Employers can choose any information they feel is necessary to include on a safe work permit. Permits typically include standard information such as:

- The date, time of issue and time of expiry of the permit.
- The specific location of the work.
- The department or company doing the work.
- A description of the work that will be done.
- The name, job title and signature of:
 - the person who issued the permit,
 - the person who received the permit, and
 - the person who certified that the work has been completed.
- The dates and times when the various parts of the permit were signed.
- Emergency contact information.
- Personal protective equipment requirements.
- A section containing any special instructions or comments.

Depending on the nature of the work, the permit needs to include reminders of the hazards that might be encountered, along with procedures to eliminate or control those hazards. For example, the permit could potentially need to include information about:

- Toxic, corrosive, flammable or other dangerous materials.
- Personal protective equipment.
- Fire protection.
- Isolating hazardous energy.
- Ventilation.
- Health hazards.

- Testing for harmful substances, combustible gases, oxygen deficiency and other hazards (before the work begins and/or during the work).
- Emergency procedures and designated rescue personnel.

Considerations when using a safe work permit

Make the permit system understandable

The system used to obtain, fill out and issue permits must be simple enough that it can be readily used by all involved work site parties. Overly intricate systems that are challenging to follow can reduce the effectiveness of the permit system and compromise safety.

A competent person must issue the permit

Safe work permits must be issued by a competent person, such as a lead operator or supervisor, who thoroughly understands the work and the work site conditions/hazards that exist or could exist.

Ensure workers understand the work and any hazards listed on the permit

The permit issuer must review the work to be done (noted on the permit) with the workers. In addition, the permit issuer must confirm workers understand all hazards and controls listed on the permit. If there is any uncertainty, the issuer must review relevant safety materials, such as Safety Data Sheets, to ensure the hazards and controls are fully understood.

Keep copies of the permit on site and readily available

A copy of the safe work permit must be kept at the work site for the duration of the work. It must also be readily available to the workers doing the work. Electronic permit systems may also be used, as long as the permit is accessible at the work site and readily available to workers.

Periodically audit the permit system

Employers must periodically audit the safe work permit system to ensure it is working effectively and take corrective action if any gaps or issues arise.

Prepare the permit at the appropriate time

Permits need to be prepared before work starts, as close to the commencement of the work as possible. Preparing permits too far in advance can lead to inaccurate hazard assessments if conditions change.

Inspect the work site after issuing the permit

A competent person must inspect the work site after the permit is issued to verify that any necessary measures have been implemented (such as testing, lockout, etc).

Ensure workers know the permit expiry and renewal requirements

Workers need to understand the permit's expiry time and any requirements related to renewal, if applicable.

Contact us

OHS Contact Centre

Alberta toll-free

- 1-866-415-8690

Edmonton region

- 780-415-8690

Deaf or hard of hearing (TTY)

- 1-800-232-7215 (Alberta toll-free)
- 780-427-9999 (Edmonton region)

Notify OHS of health and safety concerns

alberta.ca/file-complaint-online.aspx

Call the OHS Contact Centre if you have concerns that involve immediate danger to a person on a work site.

Report a workplace incident to OHS

alberta.ca/ohs-complaints-incidents.aspx

Website

alberta.ca/ohs

Let us know what you think!

To provide feedback on this publication, visit ohs-pubstore.labour.ab.ca/sh013 and click “Give resource feedback”. For more OHS resources, visit the [OHS Resource Portal](#).

For more information

Hazard assessment and control: a handbook for Alberta employers and workers (BP018)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp018

Get copies of the OHS Act, Regulation and Code

Alberta King’s Printer

alberta.ca/alberta-kings-printer.aspx

OHS

alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code.aspx

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