

Do I need a health and safety program?

OHS information for employers, prime contractors and workers

Key information

- Employers with 20 or more workers must have a health and safety (OHS) program.
- Employers must develop the OHS program in conjunction with the joint work site health and safety committee or health and safety representative.

What is a health and safety (OHS) program?

An OHS program is a coordinated system of procedures and processes designed to promote continuous improvement in occupational health and safety.

Employers and workers are responsible for their own health and safety, and the health and safety of others on or near their work site. Implementing an OHS program helps ensure the health, safety and well-being of workers.

The program promotes worker and employer cooperation in identifying and solving health and safety concerns at the work site. OHS programs also promote awareness of and interest in health and safety.

In Alberta, employers who are legally required to have an OHS program must meet minimum legislated program requirements.

For more information on these requirements, see **Occupational Health and Safety Programs: OHS information for employers, prime contractors and workers (LI042)**.



Do I need an OHS program?

The Alberta *OHS Act* states employers with 20 or more workers must have an OHS program. Each full or part-time worker counts as one worker. “Workers” includes workers hired from temporary staffing agencies, and may include students or volunteers.

For more information on whether students and volunteers are workers, see **Are students and volunteers workers? OHS information for employers and nonprofit agencies (LI022)**.



Employers determine the number of workers employed by the employer by the average number of workers at the work site on a daily basis on each working day:

- over the previous 12 months (if operations began at least 12 months prior),
- since the operations began (if operations began less than 12 months prior), or
- expected to be present over the duration of a new operation lasting 90 days or more but less than 12 months.

Some examples are included in Table 1 on the following pages.

What if I have multiple work sites?

If an employer has multiple work sites, the total number of workers at all work sites counts towards the 20 workers.

The OHS program at each work site can be the same – e.g. an employer can establish one program – but some aspects may need adjustment based on the work site. For example, hazard assessments, emergency response plans, work site inspections, and health and safety training may all be unique to each work site. There may be additional OHS program elements that need adjustment for each work site. The unique requirements for the multiple sites should be accounted for in the employer's OHS program.

Some examples are included in Table 1 below.

What if there are multiple employers or self-employed persons at one work site?

Each employer with an OHS program must have procedures to protect health and safety when another employer or self-employed person is involved in work at the work site.

If a work site has multiple employers or self-employed persons and there is a prime contractor, the prime contractor must coordinate the OHS programs of the employers and self-employed persons for that work site.

Some examples are included in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Worker number calculation examples

Example	Health and safety program required?
Employer with 20 workers at one work site.	Yes
Employer with 20 workers, distributed between two different work sites.	Yes
Work site with 30 workers from three different employers, no prime contractor. Each employer with workers at this work site has more than 20 workers total, distributed across multiple work sites.	Yes – each employer must have its own OHS program for their operations. The employers should work together to coordinate their OHS programs and communicate the coordinated OHS program for that work site to all of the employers, self-employed persons and workers.
Work site with 100 workers from five different employers and there is a prime contractor. Each employer has more than 20 workers total.	Yes – each employer must have its own OHS program for their operations. The prime contractor must coordinate the OHS programs of all of the employers and communicate the coordinated OHS program for that work site to all of the employers and workers.

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Example	Health and safety program required?
<p>Work site controlled by one employer (who has more than 20 workers), where other employers are coming to do work.</p> <p>(e.g. an office location where contractors are coming in to do renovations and the contractors are each bringing their own workers to the site)</p>	<p>Yes – the OHS program of the employer who controls the work site is in place. As part of that OHS program, the employer must have procedures for coordinating with other employers who will have workers on the work site and for communicating the OHS program to all of the workers.</p>
<p>Employer with 10 workers at one work site and no other workers at any other work site.</p>	<p>No – workers must still be involved in health and safety through hazard assessment and control.</p>
<p>Employer with 15 workers distributed between three work sites and no other workers at any other work site.</p>	<p>No – workers must still be involved in health and safety through hazard assessment and control.</p>
<p>Employer with variable numbers of workers throughout the year.</p> <p>An employer's workforce varies in number over the year as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40 workers for 16 weeks (96 working days) 10 workers for 24 weeks (144 working days) 20 workers for 12 weeks (72 working days) <p>Workers work a six-day work week.</p>	<p>Calculate the average number of workers per day</p> <p>Average workers/day</p> $= [(40 \text{ workers} \times 96 \text{ days}) + (10 \text{ workers} \times 144 \text{ days}) + (20 \text{ workers} \times 72 \text{ days})] / (96 + 144 + 72) \text{ days}$ $= (3840 + 1440 + 1440) / 312$ $= 21.5 \text{ average workers/day}$ <p>Yes – an OHS program is required.</p>
<p>An employer is starting a new operation that will last 150 working days. The number of workers at the operation will ramp up and ramp down as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 workers for the first 30 working days 50 workers during the next 100 working days 20 workers for the final 20 working days 	<p>Calculate the average number of workers per day</p> <p>Average workers/day</p> $= [(10 \text{ workers} \times 30 \text{ days}) + (50 \text{ workers} \times 100 \text{ days}) + (20 \text{ workers} \times 20 \text{ days})] / (30 + 100 + 20) \text{ days}$ $= (300 + 5000 + 400) / 150$ $= 38 \text{ average workers/day}$ <p>Yes – an OHS program is required.</p>
<p>An employer with 18 full time staff hires five workers from a temporary staffing agency for six months every year. Workers' have a five-day work week, so there are 260 working days in the year.</p>	<p>Calculate the average number of workers per day</p> <p>Average workers/day</p> $= [(18 \text{ workers} \times 260 \text{ days}) + (5 \text{ workers} \times 130 \text{ days})] / (260)$ $= (4680 + 650) / 260$ $= 20.5 \text{ average workers}$ <p>Yes – an OHS program is required.</p>

Contact Us

OHS Contact Centre

Anywhere in Alberta

- 1-866-415-8690

Edmonton & area

- 780-415-8690

Deaf or hearing impaired:

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

PSI Online Reporting Service

alberta.ca/report-potentially-serious-incidents.aspx

Website

alberta.ca/occupational-health-safety.aspx

For more information

Health and safety programs: OHS information for employers, prime contractors and workers (LI042)

<https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li042>

Are students and volunteers workers? OHS information for employers and nonprofit agencies (LI022)

<https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li022>

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