

Health and safety programs

OHS information for employers and prime contractors

This resource talks about the health and safety program requirements in the Alberta *Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act*. It also provides some foundational elements to consider when developing and implementing a health and safety program.

KEY INFORMATION

- Employers who regularly employ 20 or more workers must establish a health and safety program.
- Employers can customize the program elements to suit their workplace.

Health and safety programs help make people aware of their roles and responsibilities and require them to work together toward a strong health and safety culture.

What is a health and safety program?

A health and safety program is a way for employers to integrate health and safety into everyday practice, promote health and safety and reduce the risk of injury and illness.

Along with joint health and safety committees (HSCs), a health and safety program helps build an internal responsibility system. Consider consulting your HSC when developing your health and safety programs.

“Health and safety program” means a co-ordinated system of procedures, processes and other measures that is designed to be implemented by organizations in order to promote continuous improvement in occupational health and safety.



-OHS Act, s.1(s)

Do I need a health and safety program?

An employer who regularly employs 20 or more workers must establish a health and safety program. For health and safety programs, volunteers are included in determining the number of regularly employed workers.

When there are multiple employers

If there are multiple employers at a work site, employers must cooperate in their health and safety efforts and communicate the coordinated system to all work site parties.

If there are multiple employers at a work site and a prime contractor exists, the prime contractor has a duty to:

- Set up a system or processes to coordinate the safety programs of the employers on site. These must ensure compliance with OHS legislation at the work site.
- Make sure information flows across the work site. This includes ensuring all work site parties know about existing or potential site hazards.
- Assign an individual responsible for coordinating health and safety between employers and workers and performing the duties of an HSC.

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What to include in a health and safety program

Alberta OHS legislation does not lay out mandatory elements of a health and safety program. Employers have the flexibility to develop programs that best suit their workplace. Mandatory requirements within OHS legislation, including hazard assessment, health and safety committees and worker training, can be part of a health and safety program.

Health and safety program requirements in the OHS legislation are separate from the elements required in the voluntary Certificate of Recognition (COR) program.

A COR is awarded to participating employers with health and safety programs that meet established standards. For information on COR, please visit the [Get a Certificate of Recognition](#) web page.

The following foundational elements can help build a well-rounded health and safety program for your organization. Depending on the nature of your operation, you may have additional legislated requirements. Consider incorporating those elements in your health and safety program.

Leadership and commitment

Commitment to workplace health and safety starts from the top. A health and safety policy can be part of a health and safety program. The policy can outline the employer's intentions and the measures in place to maintain health and safety.

A health and safety policy should:

- State employer's commitment to health and safety.
- Describe goals and objectives for health and safety.
- State the legislated OHS responsibilities of all work site parties.
- Guide actions to protect and maintain the health and safety of workers at the work site.

Keep in mind, employers must ensure all workers know:

- The health and safety information related to work site hazards, controls, work practices and procedures.
- How to access OHS legislation at their work site.
- How OHS legislation applies to their work and any work they oversee.
- Their rights and duties.
- How they are held accountable.

A sample health and safety policy is included at the end of this bulletin, and in [Health and safety programs – samples and templates](#).

Once the policy is signed by a senior manager of the organization, it should be communicated to all workers.

The employer can further demonstrate their commitment by encouraging worker participation in health and safety and participating in health and safety activities.

Hazard assessment and control

Alberta's OHS legislation requires employers to conduct hazard assessments and to eliminate the hazards identified. If a hazard cannot be eliminated, the employer must introduce controls to protect against the hazard.



Employers, when conducting a hazard assessment, must involve affected workers and the health and safety committee.

Employers are responsible for ensuring information about work site hazards, controls, work practices and procedures are shared with the HSC, the workers and the prime contractor, if there is one.



Hazard assessment and control is required by legislation and is a central element in any health and safety program. It is a foundational health and safety responsibility in every workplace.

The hazard assessment and control process is a documented approach to preventing work-related illness or injuries.

A hazard assessment:

- Identifies existing and potential hazards at the work site,
- Includes biological, chemical, physical and psychosocial hazards.
- States measures used to eliminate or control those hazards.

If a hazard cannot be reasonably eliminated, employers must take measures to control the hazard. There is a hierarchy of controls that must be followed.

First choice: engineering controls. These control a hazard at the source. Examples include equipment guards, sound barriers or insulation to reduce excessive noise levels, and ventilation systems for exhaust.

Second choice: administrative controls. These change the way people work. Examples include violence and harassment prevention plans, and preventative maintenance programs.

Third choice: personal protective equipment (PPE). PPE controls the hazard at the worker level. Examples include gloves, eye protection and respirators.

Employers may need a combination of the above controls to protect workers.

Health and safety committee

Employers with 20 or more workers are required to have an HSC. OHS legislation assigns specific duties to HSCs.



HSCs bring employers and workers together to identify and solve workplace health and safety concerns. They allow workers to participate in occupational health and safety and support workers' legal rights at the workplace.

They do so by identifying health and safety issues, making recommendations for improvement, promoting awareness and interest in health and safety at work, and encouraging worker participation in health and safety

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Competency and training

Every employer shall ensure that workers engaged in the work of that employer are adequately trained in all matters necessary to perform their work in a healthy and safe manner.



-OHS Act, s. 3(2)

A timely and comprehensive worker orientation and training program is important. To help prepare workers to perform their jobs safely:

- Have a worker orientation program that ensures new workers are familiar with health and safety policies and procedures at the work site, and are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- Customize worker training for each work site and job, and assess a worker's competency at completion. For example, training might be needed when workers begin a new work activity or process, use new equipment, are moved to a different area or work site.
- Confirm workers have the right qualifications for their positions.
- Ensure supervisors have any additional training on their specific responsibilities and the hazards experienced by their workers.
- Provide ongoing or refresher training at set intervals or if required by operational changes.
- Keep records of worker training.

A worker orientation record and a summary record of training template are included at the end of this bulletin. Word versions that can be adapted to your needs are available in [Health and safety programs – samples and templates](#).

Procedures when others are on site

Take measures to keep everyone on or close to your work site healthy and safe. Employers have an obligation to ensure the health, safety and welfare of workers and the public at or in the vicinity of the work site.

For non-workers:

- Provide visitor orientations.
- Have a process in place to protect any persons who pass by or are close to the work site and could be harmed by work site activities.

For multiple employers at the work site:

- The prime contractor, if there is one, must establish, as far as reasonably practicable, a system or process to ensure work site parties comply with OHS legislation, including a way to make sure employers and workers cooperate on health and safety issues.
- If there is no prime contractor, work sites with multiple employers must set up an HSC. Employers should also work together to coordinate their health and safety responsibilities, such as:
 - Establish and communicate site-specific health and safety procedures to all employers and workers at the work site to help control hazards and ensure consistency.
 - Conduct regular monitoring to verify all employers on site follow health and safety procedures.

When contracting work out:

- Include health and safety criteria as part of your selection when choosing contractors.
- Involve your HSC in the contractor health and safety evaluation and selection process.

Additional considerations for multiple employers at the work site are listed at the end of this bulletin. Word versions that you can adapt to your needs are available in [Health and safety programs – samples and templates](#).

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Work site inspection

Work site inspections can identify and record hazards or potential hazards for corrective action. They can also help confirm the controls in place are working.

Inspection schedules and procedures should reflect the nature of your business such as the size and type of work site, the number of workers involved, the types of work being performed and hazards encountered.

An effective inspection procedure includes:

- Who should be involved in an inspection.
- Training for inspection leads.
- How to do an inspection.
- Scheduled and unscheduled inspections.
- A system to correct identified hazards.

An inspection template is included at the end of this bulletin. Word versions that you can adapt to your needs are available in [Health and safety programs – samples and templates](#).

For more on inspections see Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety's [OHS Answers: Effective workplace inspections](#).

Emergency response plan

An employer must establish an emergency response plan for responding to an emergency that may require rescue or evacuation.



-OHS Code, s. 115(1)

An emergency response plan identifies the people, resources and procedures needed to deal with emergencies.

Emergency response plans are specific to each work site and are required by legislation. The plan must anticipate and address all emergency situations that could realistically develop at the workplace. When developing an emergency response plan involve the affected workers and engage the HSC.

To be ready to activate the plan in an emergency, you must also equip and train workers, ensure the plan is accessible to everyone at work, conduct drills to practice the plan, and keep the plan current.

See the [OHS Code](#), Part 7, for details on the contents of a plan. An emergency response plan template is included at the end of this bulletin. Word versions that you can adapt to your needs are available in [Health and safety programs – samples and templates](#).

Incident reporting and investigation

An incident can be defined as an occurrence, condition or situation arising in the course of work that resulted in, or could have resulted in, injury, illness, damage to health or a fatality. Employers should have procedures in place for incident reporting and investigation.

Incident reporting

Your organization should have its own internal reporting procedures. Workers should know and follow these procedures. Internal reporting procedures can include:

- Types of incidents that need to be reported.
- How to report an incident.
- Timeline for incident reporting.
- What happens after an incident is reported.

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Depending on the nature of the incident or its consequences, employers may be legally required to [report it to Alberta OHS](#) as soon as possible. Employers should also have procedures for reporting to OHS.

Incident investigation

All serious injuries, illnesses, incidents, mine and mine site incidents, and worker exposure to radiation beyond maximum limits must be reported to OHS. Employers are required to conduct their own investigations for these reportable incidents.



When an incident happens that could have resulted in a serious injury or illness, and there is reasonable cause to believe corrective action may be needed to stop it from happening again, an employer must investigate and provide the investigation report to OHS.

The *OHS Act*, section 33 gives the details on these requirements.

Employers investigate workplace incidents to determine the cause of incidents and to prevent similar incidents in the future. Depending on the type of incidents, employers must do their own investigations.

Investigation procedures allow everyone to understand their responsibilities before an incident occurs. Investigation procedures should be in place and include:

- The objective of the investigation.
- Who is responsible for the investigation.
- Who participates in the investigation.
- Type of training the investigators will receive.
- Who receives written investigation reports.
- Who follows up on corrective action.
- Timelines for investigation.
- Type of information to include in the investigation report.
- Who maintains the documents and records, etc.

Procedures for work refusals

...A worker may refuse to work or to do particular work at a work site if the worker believes on reasonable grounds that there is an undue hazard at the work site or that the work constitutes an undue hazard to the worker's health and safety or to the health and safety of another worker or another person.



-*OHS Act*, s. 17(2).

Workers have the right to refuse to do work they believe presents an undue hazard to their health and safety or the health and safety of others at the work site.

Having a procedure in place can help the employer and worker address a work refusal efficiently and effectively. In work refusal procedures, the following should be included:

- Worker responsibilities, including:
 - Protecting the health and safety of others.
 - Prompt reporting, including a reason for the refusal.
 - Remaining on the work site unless it is unsafe to do so.
 - Returning to work if the situation is remedied.
 - Accepting other work assigned by the employer.

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- Employer responsibilities, including:
 - Correcting the dangerous situation immediately, or if it cannot be corrected, immediately discussing the matter with the worker who is refusing and conducting an inspection.
 - Notifying the HSC and responding to their recommendations in a timely manner.
 - Preparing a written report of the work refusal and giving a copy to the refusing worker and the HSC.
- Procedures for notifying OHS if the work refusal cannot be resolved.

For more information on work refusals, see [Right to refuse dangerous work](#).

Worker participation

Worker participation is key to an effective health and safety program. Engaging workers in the health and safety process brings understanding and support.

Affected workers must be included in hazard assessments and emergency response planning.

As part of the health and safety program, encourage workers to suggest ways to make the workplace healthier and safer. Have a process in place so their feedback is heard.

HSCs are another way workers can participate in health and safety.

Program administration

Maintaining your program will ensure it continues to support health and safety. Maintenance can include:

- Review the program at regular intervals or when there is a change in circumstance at the work site that creates or could create hazards for workers.
- Have systems in place for two-way communication between management, workers and the HSC.
- Analyze statistics and records regularly to identify trends and potential system improvements.
- Develop health and safety action plans that include follow-up on identified issues.
- Communicate system evaluation and action plan results to workers.

Templates and samples

Health and safety policy

Company name: _____

Company health and safety policy

This company is committed to a health and safety program that protects and maintains the health and safety of workers at our work site(s). This company is also committed to the protection and maintenance of the health and safety of others (i.e. sub-contractors) who enter onto our property and the general public.

The employer, supervisors and workers at every level are responsible and accountable for the company's health and safety performance. Active participation by everyone, every day, in every job is necessary for the health and safety excellence that this company expects. Health and safety excellence includes the promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, psychological and social well-being of all employees. Our goal is a healthy, injury-free workplace for all. By working together we can achieve this goal.

The employer will ensure:

- The health, safety and welfare of workers at the work site.
- The health, safety and welfare of other persons at or near the work site who may be materially affected by identifiable and controllable hazards originating from the work site.
- Workers are aware of their occupational health and safety rights and duties.
- Workers are not subjected to or participate in harassment or violence at the work site.
- Workers are supervised by a person who is competent and familiar with occupational health and safety legislation.
- Workers are adequately trained in all matters necessary to perform their work in a healthy and safe manner.
- Work that may endanger a worker is done by a competent worker or by a worker who is working under the direct supervision of a competent worker.
- That the health and safety committee complies with their legislated requirements.
- Health and safety concerns are resolved in a timely manner.
- Information related to work site hazards, controls, work practices and procedures is readily available to workers, the joint health and safety committee and the prime contractor, if there is one.
- Current occupational health and safety legislation is readily available to workers and health and safety committee.

Supervisors will:

- Take all precautions necessary to protect the health and safety of every worker under their supervision and ensure:
 - The workers under their supervision work in accordance with procedures and measures required by the occupational health and safety legislation.
 - The workers under their supervision are not subjected to and do not participate in harassment or violence at the work site.
- Advise every worker under their supervision of all known or reasonably foreseeable hazards to health and safety in the area where the worker is performing work.
- Report concerns about an unsafe or harmful work site act or condition that occurs/exists or has occurred/existed to the employer.

Workers will:

- Protect the health and safety of themselves and other people at or near the work site.
- Cooperate with their supervisors and employer to protect the health and safety of themselves and others.
- Use all devices and wear all personal protective equipment for the worker's protection as required by the employer or the occupational health and safety legislation.
- Refrain from causing or participating in harassment or violence.
- Report concerns about an unsafe or harmful work site act or condition that occurs/exists or has occurred/existed to the employer or supervisor.
- Participate in any training provided by the employer.
- Not perform work that may endanger themselves or others except under the direct supervision of a worker who is competent to perform the work.

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Templates and samples

In addition, the employer, supervisors and workers will:

- Co-operate with any person exercising a duty imposed by the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, regulations or Code.
- Comply with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, regulations and Code and any work site policies, procedures and codes of practice.

Other work site parties (e.g. contracting employers, suppliers, or service providers) will comply with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, regulations and Code, and work site policies.

Workers at every level must be familiar with the requirements of the Alberta occupational health and safety legislation as it relates to their work.

Employer signature _____

Date _____

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Templates and samples

Worker orientation record

Consider using a checklist like this when training new workers on health and safety in your workplace.

Worker's name:			Date of orientation:			
Date of hire:			Supervisor's name:			
Orientation topics covered	Yes	No	Written work procedures (list them here):			
Rights of workers:						
• Right to know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
• Right to participate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
• Right to refuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Company's health and safety policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Work site party responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Health and safety rules	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Site orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Review of hazards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
How to report unsafe/unhealthy conditions and other health and safety concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
How to report incidents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			Other topics covered (list them here):	
Workplace violence prevention plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Workplace harassment prevention plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Review the emergency response plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Location of fire exit(s) and fire extinguisher(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
How to get first aid treatment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Location of first aid kit(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
WHMIS training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Location of safety data sheets (SDSs)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Use of personal protective equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Worker signature:			Supervisor signature:			

This form is a sample only and is for employer reference. Employers are responsible for complying with any applicable privacy or other legislation concerning the collection of worker information. Employers should review the law and confirm its application related to the collection of personal information of workers (e.g., *Personal Information Protection Act, Electronic Documents Act, Human Rights Act* etc.). Further, completing this form alone will not necessarily put you in compliance with the legislation. It is important and necessary that you customize this document to meet the unique circumstances of your work site. Further, it is essential that this document is not only completed, but is used, communicated, and implemented in accordance with the legislation. The Crown, its agents, employees or contractors will not be liable to you for any damages, direct or indirect, arising out of your use of this form.

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Templates and samples

Summary record of training

Company:								
Location:								
Worker's name	Training completion date							Comments/other
	Site orientation	First aid		Emergency response plan	WHMIS	Safe work procedures	Harassment and violence prevention	
		Initial	Retraining					

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Multiple employers at the work site – Additional considerations

Coordinating health and safety for multiple work site parties

Examples of OHS program components that may require a coordinated, site-specific approach include:

- Hazard assessments.
- Emergency response plans.
- Inspection procedure and schedule.
- Health and safety orientation and training for workers and supervisors.
- Procedures for investigating incidents, injuries and refusals to work.
- Others, depending on the work being performed at the work site and the work site parties involved.

Criteria for evaluation and selection of other employers

When hiring other employers, the employer should consider health and safety criteria in the selection process.

Evaluation and selection procedures with pass/fail criteria may be developed in consultation with the HSC. Alternatively, a third party health and safety evaluation service or audit tool may be used.

The employer may request documentation such as:

- Health and safety program handbook or manual.
- Health and safety policy.
- Safe work policies and procedures.
- WCB information (premium rate statement, clearance letter, employer report card).
- Certificate of Recognition (COR).
- Health and safety program audit results.
- Hazard assessments.
- HSC meeting minutes.
- Safety meeting minutes, toolbox talks, or pre-job tailgate meeting records.
- Worker and supervisor training and certification records.
- Other, depending on the work being performed at the work site and the work site parties involved.

This documentation may form part of a contractor pre-qualification process that the employer uses to ensure that other employers are equipped to address the health and safety requirements of the job.

Regular monitoring

The procedures for monitoring other employers at the work site could include:

- Defining regular intervals, depending on the type and nature of the work being done at the work site.
- Scheduled formal inspections and occasional visual checks (scheduled and unscheduled).
- Assess the employer's performance against their own written procedures, work site specific health and safety policies, as well as the *OHS Act*, regulations and Code.
- Processes for dealing with non-compliances.

Please note: These are suggested processes and should be modified to suit individual employer's needs depending on the type and duration of the work being done.

Templates and samples

Work site inspection

Company:			Date:	
Location:				
Inspectors' names:				
Description of hazard (specific location and/or equipment, nature of hazard):	Recommended actions (detailed action, taking account of hierarchy of controls or a combination of controls where elimination is not possible):			
	Action	Assigned to	Due date	Completed

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Emergency response plan

Company:		Date:
Address:		
Completed by:		
<p>Potential emergencies (e.g. power outage, flood, fire, robbery)</p> <p>Refer to your hazard assessment to determine which hazards could require rescue or evaluation.</p>		

List and location of emergency equipment and facilities

Emergency equipment including fire protection requirements (e.g. alarms, sprinklers, fire suppression systems, fire extinguishers, hoses, fire doors)	Equipment	Location	Operating procedures
First aid (e.g. first aid kit – type and location; blanket, first aiders/shift, transportation)	First aid kit:		Location:
	First aid supplies and first aid room (as applicable):		Location:
	First aiders		
	Morning shift:	Afternoon shift:	Night shift:
	Transportation plan:		

Emergency response plan template continues next page

Templates and samples

List and location of emergency facilities (e.g. fire station, hospital, police, walk-in clinic)	Facility name		Address/distance		
Alarm and emergency communication requirements (e.g. type of alarm system, paging or PA system)					
Rescue and evaluation procedures					
Emergency response procedures (Detailed procedures to be followed for each identified emergency, including who is responsible for what)	Emergency situation		Procedures		
Emergency response training and requirements (List the positions or names of workers trained to use each type of emergency equipment and those trained in rescue and evaluation procedures)	Position or name			Training received	Frequency
	Morning shift	Afternoon shift	Night shift		

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Templates and samples

Emergency contact list

Company address:	Business phone:
Prepared by:	

Emergency response contacts

Police	9-1-1
Police (non-emergency)	
Emergency medical services (Ambulance)	9-1-1
Fire	9-1-1
Poison control	1-800-332-1414

Company contacts

Owner/General manager	
Manager	
Health and safety coordinator	
Maintenance	
Security	
Public relations (designated)	
Other	

Alberta Government contacts

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)	1-866-415-8690 (toll free) 780-415-8690 (in Edmonton)
Workers' Compensation Board (WCB)	1-866-922-9221 (toll free)
Alberta Environment and Parks	1-800-222-6514 (24-hour emergency hotline)
Other	

Other contacts

Power company	
Gas company	
Telephone company	
Insurance company	
Other	

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Contact us

OHS Contact Centre

Anywhere in Alberta

1-866-415-8690

Edmonton and surrounding area

780-415-8690

Deaf or hearing impaired

1-800-232-7215 (Alberta)

780-427-9999 (Edmonton)

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

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qp.gov.ab.ca

OHS

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

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