
Tips on selecting an OHS consultant

OHS information for employers

This resource provides information about selecting an occupational health and safety (OHS) consultant.

KEY INFORMATION

- Employers must protect the health and safety of workers. Employers must also protect others at or near the work site from identifiable and controllable hazards arising from the work.
 - At times, employers may choose to hire an OHS consultant – for example, to provide specific health or safety expertise.
 - Hiring a consultant does not relieve employers of their OHS responsibilities.
 - OHS can hold employers accountable if they hire a consultant that is not qualified or provides services that do not meet legislative requirements.
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Hiring an OHS consultant

As an employer, you are required to protect the health and safety of your workers. You are also required to protect others at or near the work site from identifiable and controllable hazards arising from the work being conducted. This is a general duty for all employers. (Learn more in [Guide to OHS: Employers](#).)

In some instances, you may want or need to hire a consultant – for example, if you don't have anyone on staff with suitable qualifications, training, and experience to carry out specialized work.

If you do hire a consultant, it's critical that they are competent to do the required work. Ensuring competency is part of your general duties as an employer. Hiring an unqualified or underqualified consultant can place the health and safety of your workers and other people at risk.

For this reason, you are legally accountable if you hire or direct someone who isn't competent to provide the required services. For example, an OHS officer can require you to provide missing information, if it exists, or order you to have the work repeated.

Types of OHS consulting services

There are a wide variety of OHS consulting services available. Some common examples are:

- occupational hygiene
- occupational health
- workplace safety (general)
- safety engineering
- ergonomics
- security

[Table 1](#) on the next pages gives examples of the work carried out by different types of consultants and the credentials those consultants may typically have. The table also provides links to certifying bodies where applicable. These can help you better understand scopes of work as it pertains to specific credentials.

TABLE 1: OHS CONSULTING EXAMPLES

Consulting category	Examples of consulting work ¹	Examples of consultant credentials ²	Certifying body (if applicable)
Ergonomics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and evaluate work tasks, workstations, and work environments to ensure compatibility with individual needs, abilities, and limitations. Design work to reduce risks for developing musculoskeletal injuries, e.g., back strain. Incorporate ergonomic principles into the design of work, products, or machinery to prevent injuries and improve efficiency and productivity. 	Designations such as:	
		Canadian certified professional ergonomist (CCPE)	Canadian College for the Certification of Professional Ergonomists cccpe.ca
		Associate ergonomist (AE)	
		Certified professional ergonomist (CPE)	Board of Certification in Professional Ergonomics bcpe.org
		Designations such as:	
		Ergonomics, biomechanics, kinesiology, engineering, psychology, usability, and human-system interaction	
Occupational health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop measures to enhance the physical, mental, and social well-being of workers and prevent work-related injuries and illnesses. Advise on workers' compensation claims involving disability case management and return-to-work programs, as well as claims not related to work. Assist with first aid. Assist with hearing conservation. Conduct employee health assessments. Provide occupational medicine services including assisting with biological or medical monitoring programs. Promote active worker participation in health and wellness activities. 	Designations such as:	
		Certified occupational health nurse (Canada) (COHN(C))	Canadian Nurses Association cna-aiic.ca
		Certified occupational health nurse (COHN)	American Board for Occupational Health Nurses abohn.org
		Fellow of The Royal College of Physicians of Canada, specializing in occupational medicine (FRCPC (Occ. Med.))	Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada royalcollege.ca
		Associate, Certificant or Fellow of the Canadian Board of Occupational Medicine (ACBOM, CCBOM or FCBOM)	Canadian Board of Occupational Medicine cbom.ca
		Designations such as:	
Bachelor of science in nursing (BScN)			
Bachelor of nursing (BN)			

¹ The services and expertise offered by a consultant may overlap categories. A consulting firm may offer expertise in multiple categories.

² This is not an exhaustive list of credentials. Individuals must work within their areas of competency. Certified professionals are also bound by their professional code of ethics. In some instances, OHS legislation may require specific expertise or credentials (for example, a professional engineer designation): in those cases, the relevant legislation must be followed.

Occupational hygiene ³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify hazardous environmental conditions and recommend ways to prevent injury or illness to workers. Measure and improve indoor or environmental air quality. Perform noise exposure assessments. Perform chemical exposure assessments. Recommend ways to reduce exposure to chemical, biological or physical hazards. Advise on respiratory protective equipment (i.e., respirators). Provide WHMIS support including SDS preparation. Assess or design ventilation systems. Support asbestos abatement projects. Conduct mould assessments. Conduct hazardous materials assessments. Conduct radiation measurements. Conduct radiation shielding assessments. 	Designations such as:	
		Certified industrial hygienist (CIH)	Global EHS Credentialing gobgc.org
		Registered occupational hygienist (ROH)	Canadian Registration Board of Occupational Hygienists crboh.ca
		Registered occupational hygiene technologist (ROHT)	
		Member of the Canadian College of Physicists in Medicine (MCCPM) ⁴	The Canadian College of Physicists in Medicine ccpm.ca
		Degrees or diplomas with coursework in occupational hygiene, such as:	
Bachelor of science (B.Sc.) in occupational hygiene			
Bachelor of science (B.Sc.) combined with university certificate or diploma in occupational hygiene, OHS, or occupational health			
Diploma in occupational hygiene			
Degree in physics, medical physics, or chemistry (with knowledge of radiation protection)			
Safety engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design, manufacture and operation of structures, machines, processes, products, and systems. Assess the safety of a piece of equipment (or re-certify it) and provide best practices on its operation and maintenance. Assist with fall protection systems. Assist with crane safety. Design ventilation systems. Classify areas under the Canadian Electrical Code. 	Designations such as:	
		Professional engineer (P.Eng.) with specialization in area related to consulting service	Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta apega.ca
		Professional technologist (engineering) [P.Tech.(Eng.)] with specialization in area related to consulting service	Association of Science & Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta aset.ab.ca
		Bachelor of engineering degree (B.Eng.)	

³ See [Occupational hygiene reports: requirements and tips](#) for more information.

⁴ This designation is relevant for conducting radiation measurements or radiation shielding assessments (not general occupational hygiene work).

Consulting category	Examples of consulting work ¹	Examples of consultant credentials ²	Certifying body (if applicable)
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and review violence and harassment prevention and mitigation programs. Design general work site security systems and develop procedures. Develop personal security procedures for employees who travel. Train employees to deal with emergencies and disasters. 	Designations such as:	
		Certified protection professional (CPP)	ASIS International asisonline.org
		Certified security consultant (CSC)	International Association of Professional Security Consultants iapsc.org
		A degree in psychology or criminology	
		Police or emergency preparedness work experience	
Workplace safety (general)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop procedural controls to prevent injury to workers or loss of property. Identify hazards and recommend ways to prevent injuries. Investigate incidents. Provide general safety training. Support general emergency planning. Conduct general safety audits. 	Designations such as:	
		Canadian registered safety professional (CRSP)	Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals bcrsp.ca
		Canadian registered safety technician (CRST)	
		Certified safety professional (CSP)	Board of Certified Safety Professionals bcsp.org
		Occupational hygiene and safety technician (OHST)	
		A degree or diploma related to OHS with two or more years of related work experience.	

Industry associations and health and safety associations

Industry associations or health and safety associations may offer a variety of OHS services such as:

- Health and safety training specific to your industry.
- Providing information or guidance on a variety of OHS topics.
- Health and safety advisory services specific for your company.

A list of health and safety associations that are certifying partners in Alberta's voluntary Certificate of Recognition program is available at alberta.ca/find-certifying-partner.aspx.

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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 hard of hearing (TTY)

- 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.

For more information

Certificate of Recognition certifying partners

alberta.ca/find-certifying-partner.aspx

Guide to OHS: Employers (LI009)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li009

OHS approved training

alberta.ca/ohs-approved-training.aspx

Occupational hygiene reports: requirements and tips (GS019)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/gs019

Report a workplace incident to OHS

alberta.ca/ohs-complaints-incidents.aspx

Website

alberta.ca/ohs

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OHS

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

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