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# Domestic workers

## OHS information for employers and workers

This bulletin explains how the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHS Act)* and certain sections of the OHS Code apply to domestic workers and their employers.

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### KEY INFORMATION

- Domestic workers are defined in the OHS Code.
- Domestic workers do normal household work in private homes. They are directly employed by either the owner or occupant of the home, or a person acting on behalf of the owner or occupant.
- If you hire an agency or company to do normal household work, the agency or the company is the employer.
  - In this case the person doing the household work is a worker under OHS laws, not a domestic worker.

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### Defining domestic workers

Section 1.2 of the OHS Code says that domestic worker means a person employed to perform domestic work within a private dwelling by or on behalf of an occupant or owner who lives in the private dwelling. Domestic work is normal household work, tasks or chores routinely performed by members of a household.

Domestic workers may include:

- Childcare workers, such as nannies and babysitters.
- Personal care workers who provide care for elderly persons or persons with disabilities.
- Housekeepers and maids.
- Pet-sitters.

A domestic worker can live in the home, or come in, to work.

### Domestic work hazards

Employers and workers need to be aware of the potential dangers in their work environment. Knowing what hazards are present and how to prevent them will help create healthy and safe workplaces. For domestic workers, some types of hazards may include:

- **Physical:** lifting heavy loads, working alone, slipping/tripping, animal bites, violence.
- **Chemical:** cleaning chemicals, maintenance products.

- **Biological:** viruses, bacteria, animal/pest waste, blood and bodily fluids.
- **Psychosocial:** workplace stress, violence, harassment.

### OHS requirements and domestic workers

The *OHS Act* and certain sections of the OHS Code apply to domestic workers and their employers.

#### Employers' responsibilities

##### General duties

Section 3 of the *OHS Act* states that employers must do everything reasonably practicable to ensure:

- The health, safety and welfare of workers and other persons at or in the vicinity of the work site.
- Workers know their rights and responsibilities under the OHS legislation.
- Workers are not subject to and don't participate in workplace harassment or violence.
- Supervisors are competent.
- Health and safety concerns are resolved in a timely manner.

Section 3 of the *OHS Act* also says employers must ensure:

- Workers are trained to perform their work in a healthy and safe manner.
- Only competent workers, or workers directly supervised by competent workers, carry out dangerous work.
- Health and safety information – hazards, controls, work practices and procedures – is readily available to workers.
- OHS legislation is readily available at the work site.
- They themselves cooperate with anyone carrying out a duty under the OHS legislation.

##### OHS Code

The specific provisions in the OHS Code that apply to domestic workers are listed in section 1.2(3) of the code. Those provisions say that employers must:

- Ensure workers use or wear required equipment or personal protective equipment (PPE) at the work site.
- Ensure equipment and PPE is the size, strength, design and material to withstand stresses during use, and will perform its intended function.

- Maintain equipment and PPE at the work site in safe working order.
- Ensure that, in cases where workers need to follow specifications (such as a manufacturer's specifications), the specifications are available to the workers.
- Ensure that, in cases where workers may be exposed to a harmful substance, employers will:
  - Establish procedures that minimize workers' exposure.
  - Inform workers of the health hazards associated with the exposure.
  - Train workers on work procedures.
  - Ensure workers use the procedures appropriately and apply the training.

For full details and to consult these requirements directly, see OHS Code sections 3.2, 12(a) and (b), 15.1, 21(1)(b), 21(2)(a), (c) and (d), and 21(3).

### Other legislated responsibilities

All sections of the *OHS Act* – not just general duties – apply to domestic workers and their employers. These include the right to refuse dangerous work, discriminatory action provisions, and incident reporting and investigation requirements, to name a few.

As an employer, you must make sure you know and comply with any obligations that apply to you. Consult the legislation directly to make sure you know your legal obligations.



[Guide to OHS: Employers](#) gives more information about employer responsibilities.

### Domestic workers' rights and responsibilities

Domestic workers have the same rights and obligations under the *OHS Act* as other workers.

#### Workers have the right to:

- Know about workplace hazards and have access to health and safety information.
- Participate in their employer's hazard assessment and in the control and elimination of hazards.
- Refuse dangerous work.

The general duties of workers, from section 5 of the *OHS Act*, are to:

- Take reasonable care to ensure their own and others' health and safety while working.
- Cooperate with their employer, their supervisor or any other person to protect workplace health and safety.

- Wear required PPE and use required health and safety devices or equipment.
- Refrain from causing or participating in harassment or violence.
- Report concerns – to their employer or supervisor – about unsafe or harmful work site acts or conditions.
- Participate in health and safety training and apply what they learn.
- Cooperate with any person exercising a duty under the OHS legislation.
- Only perform dangerous work if they're competent to do so, or are being supervised by a competent worker.

Learn more about workers' rights and responsibilities in [Guide to OHS: Workers](#).

### Domestic workers

## 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](https://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](https://alberta.ca/ohs-complaints-incidents.aspx)

### Website

[alberta.ca/ohs](https://alberta.ca/ohs)

## Get copies of the OHS Act, Regulation and Code

### Alberta Queen's Printer

[qp.gov.ab.ca](https://qp.gov.ab.ca)

### OHS

[alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code.aspx](https://alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code.aspx)

## For more information

Guide to OHS: Employers

[ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li009](https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li009)

Guide to OHS: Supervisors

[ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li010](https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li010)

Guide to OHS: Workers

[ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li008](https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li008)

Harassment and violence in the workplace

[ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li045](https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li045)

Hazard Assessment and Control: a handbook for Alberta employers and workers

[ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp018](https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp018)

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Classification: Public

