

Workplace Health and Safety Bulletin



Joint Work Site Health and Safety Committee Handbook



Alberta
Employment and
Immigration

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Introduction

What is a joint work site health and safety committee?

A joint work site health and safety committee is a group of worker and employer representatives working together to identify and solve health and safety problems at the work site. A joint work site health and safety committee is mandatory for any work site that is ordered to have a committee by the Minister. For all other work sites, the formation of a joint work site health and safety committee is voluntary.

The committee is really an important communication link between workers and management. Getting employers actively involved can create and maintain interest in health and safety, as well as establish positive attitudes among workers. An effective joint work site health and safety committee can assist in the reduction of losses resulting from incidents and occupational illness.


Every member of a committee should become familiar with Section 31 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and Part 13 of the Occupational Health and Safety Code. These documents describe the responsibilities and organization of committees at work sites designated by Ministerial Order.


Committees established at non-designated work sites operate under broad, flexible guidelines rather than the legislation mentioned above, but their make-up and methods of operating should be basically the same as those designated by Ministerial Order. In both types of committees, chairmanship is shared equally by co-chairs elected by the employer and worker representatives. The co-chairs also take turns chairing the meetings of the joint work site health and safety committee.

To be successful, committee members must operate in an atmosphere of co-operation, avoiding becoming adversaries. Members should bear in mind that their committee is not a policy making body and that the normal divisions of authority at the work site are not to be violated. Recommendations and suggestions are expected from the committee and management must give each concern careful consideration.

Many health and safety concerns can be resolved immediately in the course of daily work. Those that are not resolved should be dealt with by the joint work site health and safety committee. Through the minutes of each meeting, posted at the work site, the committee can ensure every problem is brought into view and kept in view until a satisfactory solution is found.

For more information

 http://employment.alberta.ca/documents/WHS/WHS-PUB_li003.pdf
Joint Work Site Health and Safety Committee Member's Guide

 http://employment.alberta.ca/documents/WHS/WHS-PUB_li005.pdf
Employer's Guide: Health and Safety Committee

Purpose of this handbook

This handbook describes procedures that have proved successful for resolving problems in joint work site health and safety committees activities.

In the daily exercise of their duties, committee members are frequently exposed to the problem of determining how things are best done. For example, how should a committee member who sees a worker taking a risk react, or how should the committee proceed if a recommendation receives no action?

Guidance in handling these problems is provided in this handbook, based on the opinions and experience of individual managers, workers and committee members at several work sites. Refer to this handbook whenever a problem is encountered.

Responsibilities of a joint work site health and safety committee

No worker, supervisor, manager or employer can hold the committee responsible for unsafe or unhealthy situations. The committee is responsible for recommending how health and safety problems might be solved, not for carrying out the necessary changes.

A frequent problem for joint work site health and safety committees is a tendency for others to expect to shift all responsibility for health and safety onto the shoulders of committee members. This must not be done. Under Alberta law, every worker is held personally responsible for working with regard for the health and safety of themselves and others. Every supervisor and manager is obligated to take reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of their workers. Every employer must do the same.

While management has ultimate responsibility for occupational health and safety at the work site, it may delegate authority to the joint work site health and safety committee, but at no time should the committee take action on its own.

The responsibilities of a joint work site health and safety committee are to:

- identify unhealthy or unsafe situations at the work site;
- recommend corrective action; and
- ensure health and safety education programs are established and maintained at the work site.

Ways of identifying hazards

Health hazards

Because health hazards seldom show an immediate injury, they are frequently overlooked by workers and employers alike. Committee members must make a special effort to learn how health is affected by working conditions and continually be on the lookout for harmful substances, vapours, noise and unsafe work practices.

Most dangerous equipment and work habits can be recognized immediately while dangers to health remain unnoticed.

The occupational health and safety challenge of today's society is to bring the same level of concern and skill to removing health hazards that we possess in dealing with mechanical hazards. After all, loss of hearing is as serious as losing an arm. Similarly, to develop stomach cancer is as fatal as to stumble into an elevator shaft.

Committee members can meet the challenge in several ways, including taking every opportunity to read occupational health and safety bulletins. They should also obtain health data on every chemical, resin, solvent, powder, liquid or gas used at the site. They may discuss health matters with Alberta Employment and Immigration occupational hygienists and medical personnel.

During work site inspections, committee members should pay particular attention to health hazards. Keep in mind the following questions:

- What dusts or vapours are in the air?
- Are there containers of chemicals?
- Is there excessive noise?
- Which work operations require repeated awkward movements, such as bending or reaching, or operating a badly placed foot-pedal?

If there is the least concern that something may not be right, it should be discussed by the committee. Further help in identifying or correcting the problem can be obtained from Alberta Employment and Immigration.

Daily concerns

Committee members should respond to any health and safety concern raised by a worker in the course of their daily work. Members should then advise the worker what steps are being taken, and continue to keep the worker informed of actual progress.

Health and safety is a responsibility of every person at a site, but all hazards will not be recognized unless every worker becomes involved and is encouraged to report what they see. They should know who the committee members are.

Members must be ready to listen and understand just what the concern is. If something needs fixing, they must see that the supervisor is informed, and tell the worker when it will be fixed. If the concern is more complex, and needs discussion by the committee, the worker should be told that the committee will deal with the concern at the next meeting. Workers will be encouraged to report their concerns only when they clearly see that action is being taken.

Inspections

Regular inspection

Committee members should inspect the work site regularly. This provides an opportunity to speak with supervisors and workers to gain their help in identifying concerns that might otherwise be overlooked.

Not all identifiable hazards will be reported in the course of daily work. People on the job may be too familiar with their immediate surroundings, and see no danger in equipment and work practices that are hazardous. Committee members need to inspect the work site regularly because they can be more skilled in recognizing what is wrong. This is partly because the eye is sharper in unfamiliar surroundings, and partly because members have more knowledge about what is safe. This knowledge can be gained by reading safety bulletins and newsletters, and also by studying the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Code. At each meeting, take time to discuss parts of the OHS Code applicable to your particular industry, gradually working through all of them.

Another reason a worker or supervisor may not report a hazard is that they're not sure it's serious. These hidden concerns will usually come out if members make a point of talking to workers and supervisors during regular inspections.

Carrying out the inspection

The work site should be inspected several days prior to each meeting. Members need clipboards, schedules of what to inspect, and a place to meet briefly to prepare the agenda for the upcoming meeting.

Every hazard discovered during the inspection should, if possible, receive some attention before the committee meets. Concerns requiring simple correction of housekeeping or maintenance practices should be referred to management immediately after the inspection. By the time of the meeting, the employer co-chair should be able to report that all have been corrected. The more difficult health and safety problems discovered during the inspection should be placed on the meeting agenda and circulated. This should allow time to give some thought to the problem before the meeting.

A small inspection team of two or more members should assemble, each with a clipboard and each assigned to inspect a different area. (As an alternative to dividing the work site into areas, each member may concentrate on one aspect of the whole work site. For example, one member may look at all buildings and fixtures, another at all machinery and equipment, another at all tools and materials. Each alternative has its own advantages and might be tried on different occasions.) To assist in remembering the variety of hazards to be looked for, each member should carry a checklist. If this seems to concentrate attention on maintenance defects and away from the larger problems of defects in design and procedures, then get rid of the checklists. To ensure worker opinions are canvassed, the committee might consider assigning one member during inspection to talk to workers rather than look for hazards themselves.

Whatever allocation of inspection duties is made, all members should still be on the lookout for health hazards and unsafe work habits.

Handling the results

Not all concerns discovered during inspection will necessarily be brought up at the meeting. Maintenance and housekeeping problems should be handled directly by management. The most serious remaining problems should go on the agenda. Anything that cannot be effectively handled before the next inspection should be carried over.

Following the inspection, the team should meet briefly to review the list of concerns and select those that need consideration by the committee.

First, list those concerns within the immediate responsibility of supervisors i.e. maintenance and housekeeping (see Figure 1). Take this list directly to management for action.

Figure 1 Housekeeping and maintenance list from inspection

J.W.S. Health and Safety Committee

ITEMS FOR SUPERVISOR'S ATTENTION

Date of Inspection: May 1/2000 Department: **Plant No. 1**

Date of Next Meeting: May 8/2000

Frayed wires on bullmoose chokers

Pile of broken moulds inside east door

Cover off breaker box #2 furnace blower

Several light bulbs dead – various places

Guard off #1 furnace blower

Extension cord damaged lying across shaker aisleway

First aid box almost empty

Fire extinguisher missing off portable welder

Select six or eight of the remaining concerns, beginning with the most serious, and place them on the agenda for the next committee (see Figure 2). The actual number may vary, but the important thing is to limit the number of items so that they can receive action between meetings. Listing too many items not only guarantees partial failure, it also means the most difficult item is the same one that gets postponed month after month.

Figure 2 Agenda as prepared following the inspection

J.W.S. Health and Safety Committee			
AGENDA			
DATE:	<i>May 8/2000</i>	PLACE:	<i>Supt. Office</i>
TIME:	<i>2 p.m.</i>	CHAIR:	<i>E. Locknacio</i>
1. Minutes			
2. Matters arising			
3. New concerns			
<hr/> <i>Noise from west 25 HP compressor</i> <hr/>			
<hr/> <i>Should be cage on sand-hopper ladder</i> <hr/>			
<hr/> <i>Lift-truck access difficult to shaker garbage</i> <hr/>			
<hr/> <i>Safety toe shoes in shipping</i> <hr/>			
<hr/> <i>Relocate emergency stop on shell moulder</i> <hr/>			
<hr/> <hr/>			
<hr/> <hr/>			
4. Accident Review			
5. Training and Education			
6. Other business			
7. Next inspection			
8. Next meeting			

Then simply leave the remaining concerns on the inspection list on the clipboard. Watch for each one during the next inspection, and put it on the new list if it is still a concern. There will be room for some of these on the next agenda, unless many more serious new concerns have arisen.

Incident reports

As many incident reports as possible should be reviewed by the committee. The causes of incidents frequently reveal health and safety problems. These problems should then be resolved in the same way as any other concerns identified by the committee.

A careful study following an incident will reveal one or more weaknesses in the work process at the time of the incident, such as defective equipment, dangerous work practices, missing protective clothing or missing guards. These defects may be thought of as the direct causes of the incident and the direct cause of injury.

The committee's interest is not only in the correction of each direct cause. The real problem is why were the defects there to begin with? What were the indirect causes? A guard missing at the time of the incident has probably already been replaced, so what the committee must consider is why was it missing? What action can the committee recommend that will help ensure guards are always in place in the future? Analyzing the deeper causes of incidents in this way is not easy. It requires patience to find true remedial action for each hidden cause that led to the defects occurring at the scene of the incident.

Wherever possible, the committee should encourage a policy of written incident investigations so that the facts can be made available to the committee. The co-chairs would benefit by helping during the investigation. Further help in understanding the investigation and review of incidents is available from Alberta Employment and Immigration.

Response to hazards

Maintenance problems

Where there is a defective condition, the supervisor should be notified. If not corrected in a reasonable period of time, the problem should be referred to the co-chairs.

Maintenance and housekeeping defects should not normally be taken to committee meetings. It would be wrong to wait for a committee meeting before anything is repaired or tidied up. These matters should be referred immediately to the supervisor by anyone, not just committee members.

If there is unreasonable delay by the supervisor in correcting these matters, this is a different problem, and one that should be brought to the attention of the co-chairs for discussion at the next meeting (see the section “Difficult to solve hazards”).

Unsafe work habits

A member who sees an unsafe work habit should point out what is wrong. Supervisors should always support such action and back up committee members.

Few problems can be more damaging to relations between committee members and other workers than unsafe work habits and the breaking of safety rules. What if a committee member ignores unsafe work habits? The whole health and safety program loses credibility! Yet if the member says anything to the worker, it can start a quarrel. And if the member goes to the supervisor instead, he simply becomes a “squealer”.

There is only one acceptable way to resolve this situation. Management should establish a firm policy that committee members are expected to point out unsafe work practices to the worker concerned. Safety is too important to permit any worker to create danger of any kind, and supervisors will fully support every committee member in observing safety rules and safe work practices. Every person on the site should be clearly informed of this policy.

Until such a policy has been made fully effective, committee members may be hesitant to discuss unsafe practices with the workers concerned. On these occasions, the member should take the problem directly to the co-chairs, who will decide whether to see the worker, the supervisor, the manager, or bring the matter up at the next meeting.

Difficult to solve hazards

Health and safety problems that have no standard solution but may require entirely new equipment, new procedures, or changes in design, should be referred to the co-chairs for action.

It has just been pointed out that many health and safety concerns consist of deficiencies in maintenance and departure from agreed upon safe procedures. These should be reported immediately and need not involve the health and safety committee.

What concerns do require recommendations and follow-up through the committee procedure? The answer is any concern that has no established corrective action or where a request for corrective action brings no results. For example:

- *Recognition of a hazard which has been accepted as requiring a specific corrective action, or the correction of which may exceed the supervisor's authority.* Examples include:
 - a mezzanine floor with no perimeter rail not previously thought of as hazardous;
 - excessive welding fumes tolerated in the past but now being complained about; and
 - a suggestion to provide a lock-out system for breaker boxes instead of the existing practice of just pulling the fuse.
- *Failure of workers to adopt safe procedures.* Resolving this may require toolbox meetings, training, improved equipment or organizations, disciplinary action, etc., depending on the real cause of the problem.
- *Maintenance not being carried out when reported.* Corrective action may involve the maintenance work-order system, availability of maintenance staff, supervision of maintenance priorities, or whatever seems to be the real problem in getting maintenance work completed.
- *Recurrence of a housekeeping defect.* The real problem could be lack of proper storage facilities, poor methods of performing the job concerned, problems with the attitude of those concerned, etc. Only when the real problem has been identified can the committee recommend action.

Conduct of meetings

Preparation

Co-chairs should ensure that:

- every member receives an agenda prior to the day of the meeting;
- the best possible room is made available; and
- each member has arranged to attend.

Agendas for meetings are essential to the success of the committee, and provide the following assurances:

- members know the time and place of the meeting;
- every item the committee considers serious will receive attention;
- business will not be sidetracked into maintenance problems or non-safety matters, at least until all pre-selected concerns have been dealt with; and
- everyone receiving the agenda ahead of the meeting has a chance to study the more difficult problems that need attention.

To ensure business is conducted effectively, the meeting should be free from intrusions and excessive noise. Members should be seated and the meeting conducted at a table if at all possible.

Copies of the previous meeting's minutes and all incident reports should be provided for each member wherever practical.

The only other requirement to make effective business possible is good attendance. Anyone who want to can usually find an emergency that prevents their attendance and everyone who is determined to attend can usually arrange that nothing will interfere. Unless a meeting is held outside the member's working hours, failure to attend is almost always a personal choice, however well disguised as "unavoidable". If a member stays away because of the feeling that the committee is ineffective, such action will only aggravate the failure. The best solution is for the member to increase their participation in committee activities, and get to grips with the real reason for its lack of success. A less desirous solution is to replace members who do not participate.

Minutes

The minutes should be entered on a form, item by item, as the meeting progresses. It is not advisable to take notes and prepare the minutes after the meeting.

A great deal of discipline is required to deal with each safety concern effectively and to keep a firm grip on following the progress of items from meeting to meeting. The most effective way to achieve this discipline is to enter every item in the minutes as it arises. In writing down each concern the secretary must clearly state each problem. This ensures that members recognize what is being discussed. In the same way, because the recommended action must be written down, all members clearly understand what they are recommending.

Assigning a different number to every concern saves time and prevents confusion. If eight concerns are discussed at the first meeting, new business at the next meeting should begin with number nine.

Copies of the completed minutes should be circulated to members, managers, and posted on the site notice board. To ensure that progress can be clearly followed by workers, the minutes of at least two consecutive meetings should remain posted.

Review of previous business

List concerns resolved and concerns in progress without feeling it is necessary to take minutes of their discussion. For each recommendation past target date, carefully re-examine the problem and discuss recommended action and assign a new target date. Enter these in the minutes. Do the same with each recommendation where the action was completed, but did not completely solve the original concern.

From the previous minutes, check off all items where the original concern has been resolved and show them as items complete on the current minutes. Then check off items where the target date still lies in the future, listing them as “in progress” These usually cause some discussion, but it is not often necessary to cover this in the minutes (see Figure 3).

This leaves items that failed to receive action. It also leaves items that did receive action, but the action did not solve the original concern — a situation that occurs frequently with difficult health and safety problems where the real nature of the problem cannot initially be proven without some testing or where one of the suggested solutions can not be proved successful until tried.

Figure 3 Minutes

JOINT WORK SITE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING DATED April 11 2000

(SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON BACK)

EMPLOYER <u>Brittle Bros. Castings</u>	MEMBERS	E	W	PRESENT	ABSENT
MAILING ADDRESS <u>P.O. Box 2, Str. P</u> <u>Edmonton T5M 3X5</u>					
SITE LOCATION <u>18328 Short Crescent</u> <u>Edmonton</u>	<u>D. Clarke</u> CO-CHAIR	✓		✓	
SITE CODE Z Z Z	<u>K. Wisolek</u> CO-CHAIR		✓	✓	
NUMBER OF WORKERS AT SITE <u>39</u>	<u>C. Tucklor</u>		✓	✓	
	<u>H. Sokoliewicz</u>		✓	✓	
	<u>A. Siebwurst</u>	✓		✓	

CONCERNS COMPLETED 16 - 35 - 37 - 38 - 40 - 41 - 43 - 44
In progress 21-39

NO.	ORIGIN	CONCERN	RECOMMENDATION	ACTION BY	TARGET DATE
36	W	Catwalk guard rail repairs	New target date	A.S.	April 12/00
42	W	Some lifting hooks in poor condition.	Fabricate in shop instead of ordering new ones	A.S.	April 25/00
		NEW CONCERNS			
45	W	#3 Lift truck — solid tires don't grip in yard	Switch with #2 truck from foundry	P.A.H.	April 12/00
46	W	No guard on fanbelts north end of shaker	Install guard	A.S.	April 25/00
47	E	Machine shop crew grinding without eye protection	Provide faceshield on hook at machine	A.S.	April 14/00
48	E	Shaker area — nobody wearing earplugs	Foreman to report on problem at next meeting	T.G.	May 9/00
		ACCIDENT REVIEW			
		Peter Smith — March 29th			
49		No procedures for ladle operator	Prepare written operating procedures	Foreman	April 18/00
50		Ladle not balancing properly	Investigate better swivel mounts	A.S.	May 9/00

OTHER BUSINESS / CONCERNS RESOLVED BETWEEN MEETINGS _____

In both cases enter each item in the minutes with its original number and then restate the problem after careful re-examination. Quite often a recommended action is not carried out because the real problem was not properly identified. Where the problem is unchanged, and the recommended action was never carried out, the committee must decide whether to assign a new target date or refer the concern to Alberta Employment and Immigration for assistance. On the other hand, where the problem after review appears different, a different recommended solution is probably required. Where there is a new recommendation, assign a new target date.

It's not easy during the meeting for a secretary to keep track of every item from the previous minutes. The co-chairs should see that every old item has been checked off before proceeding to new business.

The assistance of Alberta Employment and Immigration should only be sought when every reasonable effort has been made to resolve the problem at the committee level. In some situations, the committee may request the employer retain a consultant to resolve technical problems that are affecting the health and safety at the work site. If absolutely no progress can be made, contact Alberta Employment and Immigration.

New concerns

Ensure each new concern is a valid health and safety matter. Take care that the problem is properly identified. Ensure the recommendation is a specific action capable of completion with a definite period of time. Assign a realistic target date.

- *Validate the concern* — The concern should not receive action unless it is a valid health or safety problem. Other matters such as labour-management relations should be dealt with by other means, not the health and safety committee. Occasionally, a concern may be raised that is both a labour relations matter and a safety matter. Give the labour relations channel a chance to solve the problem first. If that fails to produce a solution, the committee may then discuss the matter. The task is to judge whether there is in fact a hazard, but not to recommend corrective steps. That is still for the labour relations channel to decide.
- *The problem* — Be careful of concerns expressed as a “need”, such as “guardrail needed on hopper platform”. Until you find out why the item is needed, the real problem may be hidden. Ask what the danger is. Ask what is wrong with leaving things as they are. In the example of the guardrail, you might find there is no danger because nobody goes up there. Or you might find that, better than a guardrail, operating the hopper gates by remote control may eliminate the need for a platform. Unless the committee questions every “need”

before it is discussed, the result can be argument, bad decisions, and lack of action.

- *The discussion* — It is up to the co-chairs to control the discussion. Common problems are:
 - **Nobody speaks.** The co-chairs should always have their own idea for a solution. If no one has any suggestions, the co-chair's suggestions usually get things going.
 - **Everybody tries to speak.** The co-chairs should have a sheet of paper and briefly note every new idea that members offer to solve the concern. Co-chairs should try to hold back discussion of any one idea until every member has made their suggestion. Working down the list of ideas, the co-chairs should then have each one discussed in turn. The most popular solution should be accepted unless there is a member in strong disagreement.
 - **There is strong disagreement.** Usually this occurs because a member does not agree that there is any real hazard. In this case, check with the *OHS Code* – it may provide the answer. If disagreement remains, compromise by making a recommendation that will partially solve the problem or provide a better understanding of it.

The other common reason for strong disagreement is personal involvement.

- *Personal involvement* — If a member happens to be the supervisor of an area where a concern has arisen, they often feel strongly motivated to prove they know the answer. The strong response by maintenance men to maintenance problems and by superintendents to production problems give the impression that they are dominating the meeting. Members seeing this problem in others should recognize it as natural and not feel offended or unable to express their own ideas. (Members should watch for this problem in themselves and recognize the wisdom of letting others speak first.)
- *The recommendation* — It is important that every recommendation be a specific action and that it be performed by a company employee, not an outsider.

Failure to state an action causes three general problems. For example, “Loaders must ensure pallets are stacked safely” is a typically poor recommendation. First, it is impossible to follow-up on. Who can ever say whether it is completed or not? Secondly, it has all the characteristics of a supervisor's authority to direct workers, thereby implying the supervisor himself can forget the problem because the committee is the new boss. Thirdly, it does nothing to solve the problem. Both valid and useful actions would be either a toolbox meeting to discuss stacking problems or preparation of a written job procedure.

Failure to limit the action to company employees makes follow-up difficult. If a lift truck problem seems to require dual whets, the action should be “order dual wheels”. Only maintenance and purchasing staff are involved. To recommend “install dual wheels” would be a mistake, Action is then in the hands of the manufacturer and common carrier. How can there be a target date? Who is accountable if the action fails to take place?

Finally, remember that many problems cannot be solved without experiment. Trying to obtain longer trailers or removing bumps in the yard may solve the lift truck’s instability better than dual wheels. Recommendations for partial solutions, studies and reports are all valid. They can be followed up with further action when more is known.

- *The target date* — No recommended action can be followed up unless a target date is set for completion. Without a target date, lack of action can mean the item is always “in progress”.

If nobody at the meeting knows how long the action should take, estimate a reasonable completion date. It may turn out to be unrealistic, but in any event the actual date will be determined by those in charge of the work, so use your own estimate as the target date.

If it seems impossible to attach any target date at all, it’s usually the recommendation itself that should be changed to include an action.

Sometimes the corrective action is extremely urgent, but practical difficulties may affect the target date. Expense, being entirely a matter for management, should not affect the recommended target date. Practical difficulties have to be allowed for, and the target date must be one that is attainable in practice. When the earliest attainable date fails to remove the danger soon enough, the committee should add a temporary solution, such as roping-off the danger area. There would then be two recommendations and two different target dates.

Incident review

Concerns arising from review of incidents can each be treated as an additional item under “New concerns”.

Training and education

A program of tool box meetings, job-procedure training and job education has a major beneficial effect on work habits. The committee should make every effort to establish and maintain such a program.

The first requirement for training and education is allocating time. The first way of using such time is simply for workers and supervisors to discuss any work-related problem. This is the “tool box talk”. The committee should promote allocation of the necessary ten minutes or so to every crew two or three times a month. Each supervisor should make a daily note of any work habit or equipment problems that catches their attention, making one of these the opening subject of the next tool box meeting.

The second way of using time should be for the development of written job procedures. The steps required to start each job, run each job and deal with emergencies on each job should be written in the form of three separate procedures for every important or difficult job. Each step should have a parallel comment drawing attention to any danger that may occur during that step. Time is required for operators and supervisors to meet and finalize the wording of these procedures.

Thirdly, time is needed for supervisors to train new workers with the help of written procedures where possible.

Finally, time is needed for job-education – an hour or so for operators and supervisors to learn, with the help of outsiders, new facts concerning the job they perform. Meetings can be arranged using such resource people as mobile equipment dealers, wire-rope or grinding wheel salesmen, Alberta Employment and Immigration staff, and so on. Videos and computer-based training programs can be borrowed. Workers can attend training courses at the work site or at training institutions.

Special problems

Safety rules

Committees should accept responsibility for recommending safety rules and safe work practices.

Many employers look to the joint work site health and safety committee to develop safety rules, and many committees look to the employer to implement them. Therefore a good understanding is required of how to make safety rules effective.

In recommending safety rules, use the following guidelines:

- (1) Establish a few written rules and a large number of safe work practices.
- (2) Written rules must be enforced, and therefore can deal only with matters so serious that termination of employment may be involved.
- (3) Safe work practices can cover less serious matters and should be encouraged by methods that do not include disciplinary penalties.
- (4) A written rule can seldom be introduced on short notice. Every rule should be willingly observed and therefore needs to be acceptable to workers. Begin by making it a safe work practice, and recommend supervisors and committee members pay special attention to promoting it. As soon as every senior worker has at least a grudging acceptance that the procedure makes sense, it can then be made into a written safety rule and enforced. (Acceptance by certain individuals may need a mixture of tough talk and persuasion from as many different people as possible before they will concede there “may be something in it”.)
- (5) Rules that are not enforced should be cancelled; they may be more appropriate under safe work procedures. If they need to be re-instituted as rules, carry out the preparation described in paragraph (4).

Attitudes

Poor work attitudes are often responsible for unsafe acts – the cause of the majority of industrial incidents. A person’s attitude towards work is greatly influenced by their environment and therefore can be changed.

Committees should consider the following factors when dealing with this problem.

- (1) *Ignorance* — Workers may not know enough about the job. Train and orient all workers, especially young and new workers, to the hazards of the job.
- (2) *Lack of standards* — Everyone is using their own idea of how to perform each task. Establish job procedures, safety rules, and safe work practices.


- (3) *Lack of understanding* — Some workers may not know they are expected to follow the set procedures. Promote communication so that standards are understood – especially through tool box meetings and performance reviews with new workers by supervisors.
- (4) *Lack of acceptability* — The standard procedure may be badly designed, and therefore not followed. Supervisors may be setting one standard for workers and a lower one for themselves. Ensure standards are realistic. Ensure standards are the same for everyone and everything; not just safe workers, but tidy work areas, clean premises, painted storage areas, good lighting, well-maintained equipment, proper tools and quality product. Insist that work standards be followed.
- (5) *Lack of enforcement* — Although this is usually the last reason for a poor attitude, it is sometimes necessary to impose a disciplinary penalty.


Inattention is another problem, caused by mental distractions. These may be the result of events occurring in the worker's private life or resulting from workplace arguments, confusing instructions, concern about working hours, wages, etc. Inattention worsens with fatigue and boredom.

The committee's prime interest in solving hazards created by inattention lies in methods of deference; warnings, alarms, fail-safe switch circuits, guards, etc. For example, hazardous steps and overhangs can be brightly painted, horns installed on overhead cranes, and hands protected by using machinery that only turns when both hands are on operator switches.

Contact us:

Province-Wide Contact Centre

 Edmonton
(780) 415-8690

 Throughout Alberta
1-866-415-8690
(Toll Free)



Deaf or hearing impaired

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Workplace Health and Safety



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Call any Government of Alberta office toll-free
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