

Health and safety programs

OHS information for employers

This resource talks about the health and safety program requirements under section 16 of the Alberta *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. It also provides some foundational elements to consider when developing and implementing a health and safety program.

For a more comprehensive guide on health and safety program development and improvement, see the [Occupational health and safety starter kit](#).

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.

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. 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. A health and safety program helps build an [internal responsibility system](#).

“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.



-Occupational Health and Safety 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 purposes of establishing a health and safety program, volunteers are included in the count of regularly employed workers.

When there are multiple employers

If a multiple employer work site has a prime contractor, it is the prime contractor’s responsibility to establish a system or process to ensure occupational health and safety compliance at the work site. This may include setting up a system or process to coordinate the safety programs of employers on the work site. Learn more in [Prime contractor role and duties](#).

If there is no prime contractor, the employers must ensure that they coordinate their efforts to ensure the health and safety of workers at the work site.

What to include in a health and safety program

Alberta occupational health and safety 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.

Requirements within the laws (such as hazard assessment, emergency response planning, health and safety committees and worker training) should be part of a health and safety program. Your organization must comply with all applicable legal requirements, even if they aren’t part of your formal health and safety program.

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.

There is more information on each element in the [Occupational health and safety starter kit](#).

Samples and templates at the back of this bulletin are also available in Word versions that you can adapt to your work site. The Word versions are in [Health and safety programs – samples and templates](#).

Where available, additional resources that go into more detail about specific topics are also provided.

Alberta's voluntary Certificate of Recognition (COR) is awarded to participating employers with health and safety management systems that meet established standards.

For information on COR, please visit the [Get a Certificate of Recognition](#) web page.

Leadership and commitment

Commitment to workplace health and safety starts from the top. This element sets out how an organization's leadership demonstrates this commitment.

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. As a best practice, a health and safety policy should include:

- The employer's commitment to health and safety.
- The organization's health and safety goals.
- Key responsibilities of all work site parties.

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

A [sample health and safety policy](#) is on page 8.

The employer can further demonstrate their commitment through both leading by example, and encouraging worker participation in health and safety. This includes listening to workers' concerns and investing the resources necessary to improve health and safety for everyone.

Employers should also figure out the best ways to communicate health and safety information. This should include effective ways to get health and safety messages out, and to solicit worker feedback and suggestions.

Keep in mind that an employer's general duties include specific requirements related to sharing information at the work site. These include ensuring that all workers are provided with health and safety information. The employer must also ensure that workers have access to the legislation and are aware of their health and safety rights and duties under the occupational health and safety laws. Find out more in [Guide to OHS: Employers](#).



Hazard assessment and control

Hazard assessment is a documented approach to preventing work-related illnesses, injuries and incidents. It is a central element of any health and safety program, and a foundational responsibility in every workplace.

Part 2 of the OHS Code requires that employers do hazard assessments and eliminate any identified existing or potential hazards. If a hazard cannot be eliminated, the employer must introduce controls to protect workers against the hazard.



Employers must involve affected workers in hazard assessment.

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. They must follow the hierarchy of controls set out in Part 2 of the OHS Code.

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 developing safe work practices and procedures, providing training and supervision, and carrying out preventative maintenance programs.

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

If a hazard cannot be eliminated or controlled by using a single control method, employers may use a combination of engineering controls, administrative controls and personal protective equipment.

Employers must share information about work site hazards, controls, work practices and procedures with the workers. If there is a health and safety committee, health and safety representative or prime contractor, the employer must share this information with them as well. Supervisors must ensure that the workers they supervise know the hazards that are present or may be present in their work area.



A [formal hazard assessment and control template](#) is on page 10.

Learn more and find an additional template (for site-specific hazard assessments) in [Hazard assessment and control: A handbook for Alberta employers and workers](#).

Emergency response plan

An emergency response plan identifies the people, resources, training and procedures needed to deal with emergencies. Emergency response planning is an important element in a health and safety program.

Alberta occupational health and safety laws require all work sites to have an emergency response plan. Some requirements are very specific: Part 7 of the Occupational Health and Safety Code for instance sets out employer obligations related to emergencies that require rescue and evacuation, and Part 11 of the code states the rules that apply to first aid.

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



-Occupational Health and Safety Code, Part 7, s. 115(1)

Emergency response plans must anticipate and address all emergency situations that could realistically develop at the workplace. You must involve the affected workers when developing your emergency response plan.

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 so that designated rescue and evacuation workers are trained and ready, and keep the plan current.

An [emergency response plan template](#) is on page 11.

Learn more and find additional templates in [Emergency response planning: an occupational health and safety tool kit](#).

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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 consider factors such as the type and size of your work site, the number of workers on site, the nature of the work being performed and hazards encountered. The results of work site inspections need to be provided to the employer, so that any identified concerns will be resolved.

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.

Employers must ensure that inspection schedules and procedures meet any applicable requirements in the Occupational Health and Safety Code.



If there is a required health and safety committee or representative at your site or in your organization, they must review your work site inspection records.

A [work site inspection template](#) is on page 13.

Procedures when others are on site

By law, employers must ensure – as much as reasonably practicable – the health and safety of all people at or in the vicinity of the work site. Your health and safety program should include processes to keep everyone who is on or close to your work site healthy and safe.

This can include visitors or passersby, if they can be affected by hazards originating at your work site. In some cases, the controls you have in place to protect workers can protect non-workers as well. Examples include equipment that captures dust, debris or sound at the source, or traffic control procedures for vehicles and people going in or out of the site.

In other cases you may need controls that are specific for non-workers, such as designated “no public access” or “workers only” areas.

Measures to keep all workers healthy and safe when there are two or more employers on site will vary, depending on circumstance. Your health and safety program can include procedures for working with other employers or a prime contractor, if those are applicable to your operations. It can also include a contractor management system, if you are a contracting employer.

Prime contractors and contracting employers are regulated work site parties under Alberta’s occupational health and safety laws. This means they have responsibilities associated with these roles, as well as employer obligations if their own workers are present at the work site.



Consult Part 1 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* for the general duties of all regulated work site parties.

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.



-Occupational Health and Safety Act, s. 3(2)

A timely and comprehensive worker orientation and training program is important. To help prepare workers to do 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 their workers face.
- Provide ongoing or refresher training at set intervals or if required by operational changes.
- Keep records of worker training.

A [worker orientation record template](#) is on page 14. A [training record template](#) is on page 15.

Incident reporting and investigation

Internal incident reporting and investigation procedures support better understanding of an organization's health and safety program: both where it's working, and where there is opportunity for improvement. They can also help ensure that prime contractors or employers meet their legal obligations to report and investigate certain types of incidents.

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 (both internally and to authorities).
- How to report an incident.
- Timeline for incident reporting.
- What happens after an incident is reported.

Certain incidents must be [reported to Alberta Occupational Health and Safety \(OHS\)](#) as soon as possible. The duty to report is the prime contractor's responsibility – or the employer's, if there is no prime contractor.

Note that requirements to report to OHS are separate from other reporting requirements that may apply: for example, to the Alberta Workers' Compensation Board or the police. Reporting requirements depend on the type of incident.

Incident investigation

Employers investigate workplace incidents to figure out exactly what happened and why, in order to prevent similar incidents in the future. Procedures for investigating incidents can be part of your health and safety program.

Investigation procedures need to be in place so that everyone understands their responsibilities before an incident occurs.

Depending on the type of incident, occupational health and safety law requires prime contractors – or employers, if there is no prime contractor – to investigate, and meet legal requirements for investigation report distribution and retention.

Section 33 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* describes incidents that must be reported to OHS as soon as possible. These are:



- Serious injuries, illnesses or incidents, including fatalities.
- Radiation overexposures.
- Incidents at a mine or mine site.

Potentially serious incidents are also reportable under section 33 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

To learn more about the act's section 33 reporting and investigation requirements, read [Incident reporting and investigation](#).

If you're not sure whether you have to report an incident to OHS, call the OHS Contact Center at 1-866-415-8690.

Work refusal procedures

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. “Undue hazard” is a term that applies to, and is defined in, section 17 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (the section of the act that sets out the rules that support the right to refuse dangerous work).

An undue hazard is a serious and immediate threat to health and safety that the refusing worker actually observes or experiences at their work site.



Having a procedure in place can help the employer and worker address a work refusal efficiently and effectively. The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* doesn't require that you develop work refusal procedures, but it does set out a number of rules about work refusals.

If your health and safety program includes a work refusal element, make sure your work refusal procedures include the steps that the law requires workers and employers to take.

For more information on work refusals, read [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.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Code workers must be included in hazard assessments, emergency response planning, violence and harassment prevention, and developing and implementing certain safe work practices and procedures.

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.

Health and safety committees or representatives are another way workers can participate in health and safety. When either of these is required by law (see below), they must carry out the following duties, as well as meet other requirements set out in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and Code:

- The receipt, consideration and disposition of worker health and safety concerns.
- Participating in the employer's hazard assessment process.
- Making recommendations about worker health and safety to the employer.
- Reviewing the employer's work site inspection records.

Employers with 20 or more regularly employed workers must establish a health and safety committee. Employers with five to 19 regularly employed workers must designate a health and safety representative.



- Note that for purposes of establishing a health and safety committee or designating a health and safety representative, volunteers are not counted as regularly employed.

Employers at a work site with two or more employers (but no prime contractor) and a total of 20 or more workers, must work together to establish a health and safety committee. Employers under the same circumstances but with five to 19 workers, must designate a representative. (Again, volunteers are not included in the count.)

An OHS director may also require a work site to establish a health and safety committee, or designate a health and safety representative.

Read [Health and safety committees and representatives](#) to learn more.

Program administration

Maintaining your program will ensure it continues to support health and safety. Here are some processes that are commonly included in this element of a health and safety program:

- 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 communication between management, workers and the health and safety committee or representative.
- 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.

Out of date

Templates and samples

Health and safety policy SAMPLE

This is one example of a health and safety policy. You can find a Word version of this sample in [Health and safety programs: samples and templates](#). If you choose to use this sample, make sure you customize it to your work and work site.

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 sites. This company is also committed to the protection and maintenance of the health and safety of other persons in our workplace, including contractors that we engage and the general public.

The employer, supervisors and workers at our company 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 we expect. Health and safety excellence includes promoting and maintaining the highest degree of physical, psychological and social well-being.

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 and safety of other persons at or near the work site, who may be affected by hazards from our work site.
- Workers are aware of their occupational health and safety rights and duties.
- Workers are not subject to, and don't participate in, workplace harassment or violence.
- Supervisors are competent, and familiar with the occupational health and safety legislation.
- Workers have the training they need to work in a healthy and safe manner.
- Dangerous work is only carried out by a competent worker, or a worker who is working under the direct supervision of a competent worker.
- That the health and safety committee or representative 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 health and safety committee or representative, and the prime contractor.
- Current occupational health and safety legislation is readily available to workers and health and safety committee or representative.

Supervisors will:

- Take all precautions necessary to protect the health and safety of every worker under their supervision and ensure:
 - The workers they supervise follow procedures and measures required by the occupational health and safety legislation.
 - The workers they supervise are not subject to and don't participate in workplace harassment or violence.
- Advise every worker they supervise about all known or reasonably foreseeable hazards to health and safety in their work area.
- Report health and safety concerns to the employer.

Workers will:

- Protect their own health and safety, as well as that of other people at or near the work site.
- Cooperate with their supervisors and employer to protect their own and others' health and safety.
- Use all devices and wear all personal protective equipment required by the employer or the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* or Code.
- Refrain from causing or participating in workplace harassment or violence.
- Report health and safety concerns to the employer or supervisor.
- Participate in any training provided by the employer.
- Not perform work that may endanger themselves or other, unless they are directly supervised by a worker who is competent to perform the work.

Health and safety policy sample
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Templates and samples

In addition, the employer, supervisors and workers will:

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

The company will ensure, to the best of its ability, that other parties at the work site (e.g. contractors, suppliers, or service providers) comply with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and Code, and work site policies.

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

Company signature _____

Date _____

This form is for example purposes only. 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. Neither the Crown, nor its agents, employees, or contractors, will be liable to you for any damages, direct or indirect, arising out of your use of this form.

Out of date

Templates and samples

Formal hazard assessment and control TEMPLATE

This is one example of a formal hazard assessment and control report template. You can find a Word version of this template in [Health and safety programs: samples and templates](#). If you choose to use this template, make sure you customize it to your work and work site.

Job/position/work type:			Date of assessment:
Assessment performed by:			Reviewed/revised:
Task (List all tasks/activities of the job/position)	Hazard (List all existing and potential health and safety hazards related to the identified tasks)	Controls (List the controls for each hazard: elimination, engineering, administrative, personal protective equipment or a combination thereof)	Date implemented:
		Elimination: Engineering: Administrative: PPE:	
		Elimination: Engineering: Administrative: PPE:	
		Elimination: Engineering: Administrative: PPE:	
		Elimination: Engineering: Administrative: PPE:	
		Elimination: Engineering: Administrative: PPE:	

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Templates and samples

Emergency response plan TEMPLATE

This is one example of an emergency response plan template. You can find a Word version of this template in [Health and safety programs: samples and templates](#). If you choose to use this template, make sure you customize it to your work and work site.

Company:		Date:
Address:		
Completed by:		
Potential emergencies (e.g. medical event, flood, fire, robbery)		
Refer to your hazard assessment to determine which hazards could require rescue or evacuation.		

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. type and location of first aid kit and supplies, 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

Worker orientation record TEMPLATE

Consider using a checklist like this when training new workers on health and safety in your workplace. You can find a Word version of this template in [Health and safety programs: samples and templates](#). If you choose to use this template, make sure you customize it to your work and work site.

Worker's name:			Date of orientation:		
Date of hire:			Supervisor's name:		
Orientation topics covered	Yes	No	Written work procedures:		
Site orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
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"/>			
Work site party responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Health and safety committee or representative identification	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Employer's health and safety policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Workplace violence prevention plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Workplace harassment prevention plan					
How to report harassment and/or violence incidents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Review of hazards and controls	<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"/>			
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) and supplies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Ergonomics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
WHMIS training (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Safety data sheet locations (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Use of personal protective equipment (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
<i>(List any other topics relevant to the work site.)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	<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. Neither the Crown, nor its agents, employees, or contractors, will be liable to you for any damages, direct or indirect, arising out of your use of this form.

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.

Report a workplace incident to OHS

alberta.ca/ohs-complaints-incidents.aspx

Website

alberta.ca/ohs

Get copies of the OHS Act, Regulation and Code

Alberta Queen's Printer

qp.gov.ab.ca

OHS

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

For more information

Emergency response planning: an occupational health and safety tool kit (BP040)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp040

Guide to OHS: Employers (LI009)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li009

Hazard Assessment and Control: a handbook for Alberta employers and workers (BP018)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp018

Health and safety committees and representatives (LI060)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li060

Health and safety programs: samples and templates (LI042TMP)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li042tmp

Incident reporting and investigation (LI016)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li016

OHS concerns and incidents

alberta.ca/ohs-complaints-incidents.aspx

Occupational health and safety and the internal responsibility system (LI051)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li051

Occupational health and safety starter kit (BP035)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp035

Prime contractor role and duties (LI018)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li018

Right to refuse dangerous work (LI049)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li049

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