
Hazardous footwear

OHS information for work site parties

This resource explains requirements regarding foot protection and footwear under the OHS Code.

KEY INFORMATION

- Employers must assess all work site hazards, including those related to footwear.
 - Employers are prohibited from mandating footwear that poses a risk to workers' health and safety.
 - Workers can wear their choice of footwear if it is safe to do so.
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What is hazardous footwear?

Certain kinds of footwear, like high-heeled shoes, can put workers at an increased risk of injuries from slips, trips, and falls. In addition, some types of work can put workers at risk of a foot injury. Accordingly, section 233 of the OHS Code outlines a number of requirements related to foot protection and footwear.

What are the health and safety risks of hazardous footwear?

Some types of footwear (e.g. high-heeled shoes) can put workers at an increased risk of slips, trips, falls, and musculoskeletal injuries. In most cases, this footwear is not necessary for workers to perform their work.

This hazard can be more prevalent in work such as serving food, which requires workers to navigate busy spaces while carrying food.

For some workers, prolonged use of certain types of footwear may result in additional health issues, such as joint pain or back problems. These effects are most likely to occur when footwear is not well-suited to the work environment.

Are high-heeled shoes prohibited in the workplace?

OHS law does not specifically prohibit high-heeled shoes in workplaces. However, employers are prohibited from requiring workers to use footwear that poses a health and safety hazard. In addition, under OHS law, workers are required to take reasonably practicable steps to protect their health and safety, which extends to their choice of footwear.

Workers can voluntarily wear high-heeled shoes or other footwear of choice if the work environment is suitable and it is safe to do so.

How can workers be protected from harm?

Employers must consider footwear-related hazards when performing their required hazard assessment. In assessing the potential harm to workers from footwear, the employer must consider hazards such as:

- slipping
- tripping
- uneven terrain
- abrasion
- ankle protection and foot support
- potential for musculoskeletal injuries
- crushing potential
- temperature extremes
- chemical hazards
- puncture hazards
- electrical shock
- other applicable hazards specific to the environment or type of work

After doing a hazard assessment, the employer must take steps to eliminate or control hazards (for example, levelling uneven ground at a work site). Employers must also ensure workers use footwear that is appropriate to the hazards associated with the work being performed and the work site. For some specific types of work, protective footwear must comply with approved industrial standards as specified in section 233 of the OHS Code.

How do footwear requirements apply to actors, models, and other performers?

Actors, models, and performers may have specific training and rehearsal experience with their footwear. This may mitigate the risks these workers face while rehearsing and performing, such as slips and trips.

However, when determining the requirements for appropriate protective footwear, an employer should not allow training or experience as a substitute for protective footwear, or as a reason to allow unsafe footwear to be worn.

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

Guide to OHS: Employers (LI009)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li009

Guide to OHS: Workers (LI008)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li008

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

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp018

Safe Stages Best Practices (BP027)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp027

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