

Health and Safety Committees

Health and Safety Committee - What is a Health and Safety Committee?

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What is a health and safety committee?

In Canadian legislation, health and safety committees are mentioned under slightly varying names. The committee may also be known as the joint health and safety committee, occupational health committee, workplace safety and health committee, or occupational health and safety committee.

A health and safety committee is a forum for bringing the [internal responsibility system](#) into practice. The committee consists of labour (worker) and management representatives who meet on a regular basis to deal with health and safety issues. The advantage of a joint committee is that the in-depth practical knowledge of specific tasks (labour) is brought together with a larger overview of company policies and procedures (management). Another significant benefit is the enhancement of cooperation among all parts of the workforce toward solving health and safety problems. In smaller companies with fewer than a specified number of workers, a health and safety representative is generally required. Consult health and safety legislation applicable to your workplace for details.

Please refer to the following OSH Answers documents for more information about health and safety committees:

- [Health and Safety Committee – Creation](#)

- [Health and Safety Committee – Effective and Efficient](#)
 - [Health and Safety Committee – Measuring Effectiveness](#)
 - [Health and Safety Committee – Structure of Meetings](#)
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Who is responsible for establishing a health and safety committee?

Employers are responsible for establishing health and safety committees. Most Canadian health and safety legislation sets guidelines for organizing the committee, its structure, meeting frequency, and the roles and responsibilities of committee members.

Employers establish terms of reference applicable to the formation, structure, and functioning of the committee. Such terms of reference must ensure:

- Compliance with occupational health and safety legislation.
 - Effectiveness of the committee in meeting workplace-specific needs.
 - Widest possible worker involvement.
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What does a health and safety committee do?

While exact roles may vary by jurisdiction, in general, the committee assists the employer to:

- Recognize workplace hazards.
- Evaluate the hazards and risks that may cause incidents, injuries, and illness.
- Participate in the development and implementation of programs to protect the workers' safety and health.
- Respond to worker complaints and suggestions concerning safety and health.
- Ensure the maintenance and monitoring of injury and work hazard records.
- Monitor and follow up hazard reports and recommend action.
- Set up and promote programs to improve worker training and education.
- Participate in health and safety inquiries and investigations, as appropriate.
- Consult with professional and technical experts.
- Participate in resolving workplace refusals and work stoppages.
- Make recommendations to management for incident prevention and safety program activities.

- Monitor the effectiveness of safety programs and procedures.

Is a committee or a representative required by law?

A health and safety committee or the appointment of health and safety representatives is either mandatory or subject to ministerial decisions in all Canadian jurisdictions. Certain types of workplaces may be exempt from this requirement, depending on the size of the workforce, industry, incident record, or some combination of these factors. Consult the most up-to-date applicable legislation to find out what requirements are for your workplace.

What are the sources of legislation regarding health and safety committees?

The following are references to the provincial and federal legislation, where you will find the requirements for health and safety committees from the different jurisdictions in Canada. Since legislation is amended from time to time, the jurisdictions should be contacted for the most current information. The most recent versions of the legislation can often be accessed directly from the website of the [government agency responsible for occupational health and safety](#).

Canada (Federal)

Canada Labour Code, Part II (R.S.C. 1985, C. L-2), Sections 135 to 137

Policy Committees, Work Place Committees and Representative Regulations (SOR/2015-164)

(Called: Policy Health and Safety Committees; Work Place Health and Safety Committees)

Alberta

Occupational Health and Safety Act (S.A. 2020, O-2.2 as amended), Part 2, Health and Safety Committees Representatives and Programs, Sections 13 to 16

Occupational Health and Safety Code (Reg. 191/2021) Part 13, Joint Health and Safety Committee and Health and Safety Representatives, Sections 196 to 202

(Called: Joint Health and Safety Committees)

British Columbia

Workers Compensation Act, (R.S.B.C. 1996 as amended) Part 2, Division 5, Sections 31 to 46

(Called: Joint Health and Safety Committees)

Manitoba

Workplace Safety and Health Act (R.S.M. 1987, c. W210), Section 40

Workplace Safety and Health Regulation (Man. Reg. 217/2006), Part 3, Sections 3.1 to 3.9

(Called: Workplace Safety and Health Committees)

New Brunswick

Occupational Health and Safety Act (A.N.B. 1983, c. O-0.2), Sections 14 to 18

(Called: Joint Health and Safety Committees)

Newfoundland and Labrador

Occupational Health and Safety Act (R.S.N. 1990, c. O-3), Sections 37 to 40

Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2012, N.L.R 5/12, Part IV Section 25

(Called: Occupational Health and Safety Committees)

Northwest Territories

Safety Act (R.S.N.W.T. 1988, c. S-1), Section 7.1

Also: *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations* (R-039-2015), Part 4 Sections 37 to 43

(Called: Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee)

Nova Scotia

Occupational Health and Safety Act (S.N.S. 1996, c. 7), Sections 29 to 32

(Called: Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees)

Nunavut

Safety Act (R.S.N.W.T. 1988, c. S-1), Section 7.1

Also: *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations* (R-039-2015), Part 4 Sections 37 to 43

(Called: Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee)

Ontario

Occupational Health and Safety Act (R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1), Sections 8 to 11

(Called: Joint Health and Safety Committees)

Prince Edward Island

Occupational Health and Safety Act (R.S.P.E.I. 2004, c. 42), Section 25

(Called: Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees)

Quebec (English language legislation)

Act respecting Occupational Health and Safety (R.S.Q., c. S-2.1), Chapter IV, Sections 68 to 86.

And the *Regulation respecting health and safety committees* (R.R.Q. 1981, c. S-2.1, r. 6.1, O.C. 2025-83)

(Called: Health and Safety Committees)

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan Employment Act (S.S., 2013, c. S-15.1), Sections 3-22 to 3-27

(Called: Occupational Health Committees)

Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020, Part 4, Sections 4-1 to 4-12

Yukon Territory

Workers' Safety and Compensation Act (S.Y. 2021), Part 3, Division 3, Sections 36 to 43

(Called: Health and Safety Committees)

When are health and safety committees required, how many people are on the committee, and who are the committee members?

Table 1 provides brief information about the committees: when they are necessary, size (number of members), and representation. This summary is intended to provide basic facts. Please consult the legislation applicable to your workplace for exact requirements, including those for construction and project work.

Table 1 Legislation Requirements for Health and Safety Committees			
Jurisdiction	When do I need one?	Size of Committee	Representation
Canada (Federal)	Mandatory - 20 or more employees	At least 2	At least half to represent employees
Alberta	Mandatory - 20 or more workers, or when required by a Director	At least 2 persons. An employer must determine how many worker members are needed	At least half must represent workers
British Columbia	Mandatory - when there are 20 or more workers or when "required by order"	At least 4	At least one-half must be worker representatives
Manitoba	Mandatory - 20 or more workers, or when required by the Director	At least 4 and not more than 12	At least half to represent workers
New Brunswick	Mandatory - 20 or more workers	As agreed upon by workers and employer	Equal Representation
Newfoundland and Labrador	Mandatory - 20 or more workers	At least 2 and not more than 12	At least half to represent workers
Northwest Territories	Mandatory - 20 or more, or as directed by the Chief Safety Officer	Not Specified	Equal Representation
Nova Scotia	Mandatory - 20 or more employees, or when required by a Director	As agreed upon by employees and employer	At least half to represent employees
Nunavut	Mandatory - 20 or more, or as directed by the Chief Safety Officer	Not Specified	Equal Representation
Ontario	Mandatory - 20 or more workers, or when ordered by the Minister, or where a designated substance is in use (no minimum number of workers and not required for construction projects with	At least 2 (fewer than 50 workers); At least 4 (50 or more workers)	At least half to represent workers

Table 1 Legislation Requirements for Health and Safety Committees			
Jurisdiction	When do I need one?	Size of Committee	Representation
	designated substances and fewer than 20 workers)		
Prince Edward Island	Mandatory - 20 or more workers, or when required by a Director (if there are fewer than 20 and more than 5 workers)	As agreed upon by workers and the employer or as ordered by a Director	At least half to represent workers
Quebec	20 or more workers in an establishment belonging to a category in the regulations, or where written notice is given by a certified association or the workers or the employer, and where required by CNESST*	Determined by the regulation and category of the establishment. Not more than 11 worker representatives	At least half to represent workers
Saskatchewan	Mandatory - when 10 workers or more, or when required by a Director	At least 2 and not more than 12	At least half to represent workers
Yukon	Mandatory - 20 or more workers, or when required by the Board	At least 4 and not more than 12	At least half to represent workers

*CNESST = Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail

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