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# Implementing an Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Program

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Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

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# INTRODUCTION

## What is an occupational health and safety (OH&S) program?

An occupational health and safety (OH&S) program is a systematic approach to activities, procedures, and policies designed to ensure and maintain a safe and healthy workplace, and is a definite plan of action designed to prevent accidents/incidents and occupational disease. A strong program in health and safety is essential to the overall success of the organization.

## Why have an OH&S program?

Effective occupational health and safety programs have been proven to reduce accidents and illnesses in the workplace. Health and safety is fundamental to an organization's success in all areas. It is not an afterthought — it is about doing things right the first time. Having an occupational health and safety program is not just about complying with legislation. The ultimate goal is to make health and safety a core value of the organization. Careful implementation of a good health and safety program will determine its success. In leading organizations, health and safety is as important as all other matters such as production and cost control. Leadership for the OH&S program comes from all levels of the organization – senior managers, managers, supervisors, and workers are all involved. Each person understands their responsibilities for preventing accidents and contributing to safe workplaces.

## Objectives

This guide provides information on how to develop and implement an Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) program. It will help you to:

- Create an OH&S program, with emphasis on effectiveness, compliance, diligence, and documentation,
- Prevent or reduce hazards and risks to employees, equipment, material and environment by using your workplace hazard assessments, and
- Monitor and improve your OH&S program.

## Target Audience

This guide is written for anyone who is committed to providing a healthy and safe workplace.

It will assist employers, owners, managers, supervisors, operators - and the organization as a whole - by providing guidance on the development, maintenance, and continual improvement of an OH&S program.

It will also help the organization to:

- Assign responsibilities and accountabilities for OH&S,
- Decrease workplace fatalities, illnesses and injuries,
- Reduce the impact of incidents/accidents in the workplace, and
- Foster a workplace culture of prevention and awareness towards health and safety issues.

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# SECTION 1: OH&S PROGRAM - OVERVIEW

## Definition

An **OH&S program** is a systematic plan to identify, assess, and control hazards, and respond to emergencies. The program will describe the steps needed to meet the goals specified in the policy. The program lays out responsibilities, resources and procedures for keeping the workplace safe and healthy. The objective is to integrate safety and health into all work practices and conditions.

– Definition adapted from: Safe Work Manitoba

While this entire manual is written to help you establish your OH&S program, this section will outline why a program is important and the steps that need to be taken. Section 2 describes how to establish your OH&S policy – the policy will provide the overall approach to health and safety and give your program clear direction.

## OH&S Policy vs. Program

Every program will start with an overall policy (see Section 2). An organization's occupational health and safety policy is a statement of principles and general rules that serve as a guide for action. Senior management must be committed to ensuring that the policy is carried out with no exceptions. The health and safety policy should have the same importance as the other policies of the organization.

A health and safety program is a definite plan of action designed to prevent accidents and occupational diseases. An OH&S program is required under occupational health and safety legislation in most Canadian jurisdictions. A health and safety program must include the elements required by the health and safety legislation as a minimum. A program is not one thing – it will involve many aspects in order to cover the various hazards or situations in your workplace.

## Setting up an OH&S Program

Because organizations differ, a program developed for one organization will not necessarily meet the needs of another. Be sure to do a hazard assessment and address the specific needs that are present in your workplace. In general, the work flow will be to:

1. Write an OH&S policy that reflects your organization's commitment to health and safety.
2. Identify people and resources (e.g., health and safety committee, legislation, etc.).
3. Prepare statements of responsibilities.
4. Identify hazards (risk assessment, hazard control).
5. Develop procedures for "common" elements such as emergency preparedness, training, inspections, investigations, etc.
6. Develop procedures based on the specific hazards in your workplace (e.g., violence prevention, driving, etc.).
7. Implement the programs, education, and training to all employees.
8. Regularly monitor, audit, and review your program.

### Sample 4: Due Diligence Checklist

Task	Yes	No	Action
Written health and safety policy			
Written health and safety program			
Know and follow all the duties of the employer under OH&S legislation			
Comply with OH&S legislation			
Health and safety committee(s) or representative established and functions as required by OH&S legislation			
Hazard identification, analysis, risk assessment, and documentation			
Hazard control measures and prevention programs			
Hazard reporting system for all employees			
Safe Work Practices specific to your workplace			
Safe Job Procedures specific to your workplace			
Orientation safety training for all employees			
Workplace specific safety training			
Ongoing safety training as required			
Workplace inspections conducted as required by OH&S legislation			
Complete and accurate record keeping including training, accident/incident reports, inspections, health and safety committee minutes, etc.			
Discipline and enforcement when required			
Auditing of health and safety program			
Other:			

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## Sample 22: Personal Protective Equipment Policy

### Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) Policy

It is the policy of this organization that all personnel use the proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when and where required.

All employees shall wear CSA approved equipment (e.g., eye protection, hearing protection, hard hats, and safety footwear). Employees working in area \_\_\_\_\_ are also required to wear long pants and long sleeved shirts.

The following PPE will be supplied by the organization.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

All PPE shall be in good condition and maintained according to your training and manufacturers' instructions.

All employees shall inspect their PPE before each use. Supervisors shall inspect PPE during safety inspections. All PPE found suspect will be tagged "Out of Service", removed from use and only returned to service if approved by a qualified technician.

All employees not obeying this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with company rules.

G. Miller, General Manager	
Date:	

**This policy complies with, or exceeds, all applicable legislation.**

## Sample 40: Emergency Evacuation Procedures

<b>Prepared By:</b>		<b>Title:</b>	
<b>Site Location:</b>		<b>Date Prepared:</b>	
<b>Equipment Required:</b>	1. Aerosol actuated air horn	2. ABC Fire Extinguisher	
<b>General Evacuation Steps:</b>			
1. Evacuation procedures shall be initiated by the site supervisor.			
2. The site evacuation signal shall be three short blasts on the air horn followed by a five second delay then three more short blasts on the air horn until the air horn is exhausted or all persons have been accounted for by the supervisor.			
3. ALL workers shall leave the site on hearing the alarm, walk to the nearest safe exit and assemble at the muster point.			
4. Each supervisor shall take a roll-call to ensure all their workers have been accounted for.			
5. Each supervisor shall then report the roll-call results to the designated senior supervisor, superintendent or manager.			
6. The senior supervisor/superintendent/manager shall personally determine if the site is safe to return to work.			
7. The senior supervisor/superintendent shall conduct an investigation of the cause(s) of the evacuation and report to management.			
<b>Fire, Leaking Gases, Liquids</b>			
1. STOP – Turn off all equipment.			
2. Call 911 or (xxx) xxx-xxxx			
3. Know the location of all fire extinguishers and how to use them			
4. PROTECT YOURSELF FIRST. Then try to assist others. If safe and trained to do so, try to contain the fire and/or shut off leaking gases or fluids.			
5. Evacuate the site if the fire cannot be put out or the gases/liquids cannot be shut off or contained in a small area.			
6. KNOW WHERE THE EXITS ARE and be sure they are not locked or blocked.			
7. Check to see if the people you were working with have got out.			
<b>Fire, Leaking Gases, Liquids</b>			
1. Make sure that you are safe first.			
2. Keep upwind.			
3. Administer first aid to maintain life.			
4. Keep unnecessary people away or ask/send for qualified assistance if needed.			
5. Assist arriving EMS persons as they may request.			
6. DO NOT return to the affected area until told it is safe to do so by the supervisor or Fire Captain.			
<b>Explosions</b>			
Explosions include those caused by leaking gas, faulty or incorrectly placed heating equipment and other flammable vapours.			
1. Fall to the floor/ground and take immediate shelter under tables, desks or anything that will give protection from flying debris.			
2. Explosions are usually followed by fire – see above FIRE, LEAKING GASES, LIQUIDS.			
3. Explosions often cause injuries – see above IF A VICTIM MUST BE RESCUED.			
<b>Electrical Shock</b>			
Electrical shock may throw the victim away from the point of contact OR the victim may not be able to let go.			
1. SWITCH OFF OR UNPLUG THE ELECTRIC POWER SOURCE ONLY IF SAFE FOR YOU TO DO SO.			
2. ENSURE THE VICTIM IS NOT STILL CONNECTED TO THE ELECTRICAL SOURCE - DO NOT TOUCH THE VICTIM IF NOT SURE. If necessary, use a dry non-metal broom handle or other insulated means to free the victim from the connection.			
3. Administer first aid to maintain life.			
4. Keep unnecessary people away or ask/send for qualified assistance if needed.			
5. Assist arriving EMS persons as they may request.			
<b>Wildlife Contact:</b> List the local wildlife ministry or department instructions depending on the type of animal(s) likely to be encountered.			
<b>Emergency Phone Numbers</b>			
<b>Fire, Police, Medical</b>	<b>911 Or ( ) ( ) -</b>	<b>Poison Control</b>	
<b>Water/Sewer Utility</b>		<b>Electrical Utility</b>	
<b>Gas Utility</b>		<b>Cable Utility</b>	
<b>Phone Utility</b>		<b>Health And Safety</b>	
<b>Wildlife</b>		<b>Environment</b>	
<b>Supervisor</b>		<b>Company Safety Coordinator</b>	

– Adapted from Alberta Construction Safety Association course material

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# SECTION 21: AUDIT, EVALUATION, AND CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

## Definition

**Audit** – the systematic and documented process for obtaining audit evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which the criteria are fulfilled.

- CSA Z1000-6 "Occupational Health and Safety Management"

Audits provide the opportunity for continual improvement of health and safety performance and the OH&S Program. Results should be reviewed by management to determine any shortcomings and recommend changes to the existing processes, procedures and programs. Audits can also be used to help identify areas where progress has been made, reductions in accident rates, people who contributed to the success, etc.

There are different types of audits, some very detailed while others more straightforward. Choose the style that best suits your organization and the complexity of your OH&S program.

Performing audits of the OH&S Program will help you to identify if your program is working, and if, at minimum, your program is meeting health and safety legislation requirements. This annual audit should determine:

- Effectiveness of the OH&S Program in achieving the objectives and targets
- Effectiveness of worker and worker representative participation
- Compliance with OH&S laws and other requirements
- Implementation and completion of evaluations, actions and reviews
- Promotion of continual improvements and improved procedures, practices and programs

Some audits are carried out by independent agencies or consultants and others are done in-house by those responsible for developing and maintaining the health and safety program. Either way, an internal audit team should be competent to carry out the workplace audit. The team must have training on:

- How to perform audits
- Which elements of the OH&S Program are to be audited
- How to report findings
- How to write reports, etc.

It is also advisable to select members of the audit team from different functional areas of your organization. This mix of people will help to ensure that the auditors are independent from the activities being audited and will provide unbiased feedback.

## Evaluation

All preventative and corrective actions, including those recommended during internal and external inspections and audits, must be recorded and tracked to ensure their successful implementation. These actions will also provide information to be used in the management review of the OH&S Program.

Consider all these sources of information:

- Audit results
- Workplace inspection results and recommendations

# APPENDIX C: INTERNAL AUDIT CHECKLIST

Legend:     **D** = Documentation     **O** = Observation     **I** = Interview

Elements/Guidelines		Score		
		Yes	No	Verify
<b>1.1 Employer health and safety policy contains the following:</b>				
<b>1.1(a) Employer's commitment</b>	<b>Employer's commitment</b> to preventing occupational illness and injury in the workplace and promoting health and well-being	5	0	D
<b>1.1(b) Employer responsibility</b>	<b>Employer responsibility</b> to implement and maintain a safe and healthy work environment	5	0	D
<b>1.1(c) Supervisor responsibility</b>	<b>Supervisor responsibility</b> to ensure that safe and healthy conditions are maintained in his/her assigned work area	5	0	D
<b>1.1(d) Worker responsibility</b>	<b>Worker responsibility</b> to work safely following legislated and employer Safe Work Procedures / Practices	5	0	D
<b>1.1(e) Dated</b>	<b>Dated</b> within 12 month period	5	0	D/O
<b>1.1(f) Signed</b>	<b>Signed</b> by the most senior management person on site	5	0	D/O
<b>1.1(g) Posted</b>	<b>Posted</b> on bulletin boards - Accessible to all employees	10	0	O
<b>2.1 Employer has established health and safety responsibilities and performance accountabilities:</b>				
<b>2.1(a) Manager responsibilities</b>	<b>Manager responsibilities to ensure performance of:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performing workplace inspections</li> <li>• Conducting information sessions (safety talks, etc.)</li> <li>• Conducting incident investigations</li> <li>• Conducting employee training</li> <li>• Correcting substandard acts, conditions or behaviours</li> <li>• Commending employee and supervisor health and safety performance</li> <li>• Performing employee health, safety and well-being observations</li> <li>• Encourage employees to report unsafe conditions, faulty equipment, or any other health and safety concern</li> </ul>	1	0	D/
<b>2.1(b) Manager accountabilities</b>	<b>Manager accountabilities: Performance evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System must be formalized</li> <li>• Measures each responsibility</li> <li>• Performed regularly, at least annually</li> </ul>	10	0	D/I





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# APPENDIX D : CANADIAN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS RESPONSIBLE FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

## Canada (Federal jurisdiction)

Occupational Health and Safety: Labour Program  
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada  
1-800-641-4049  
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0J2

Contacts for regional and district offices for

Occupational health and safety

[http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/labour/workplace\\_health/index.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/labour/workplace_health/index.shtml)

Labour Program

<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/labour/index.shtml>

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/home.shtml>

Government of Canada

<http://canada.gc.ca/>

## Alberta

Workplace Health and Safety  
Alberta Employment and Immigration  
10th Floor Seventh Street Plaza, South Tower  
10030 - 107 Street  
Edmonton AB T5J 3E4  
General Inquiries: (780) 415-8690; FAX: (780) 422-3730  
Workplace Health and Safety Call Centre: 1-866-415-8690  
Web Site: <http://employment.alberta.ca/SFW/53.html>

## British Columbia

WorkSafeBC  
6951 Westminster Highway  
P.O. Box 5350 STN Terminal  
Richmond BC V6B 5L5  
Health & Safety Questions (604) 276-3100; 1-888-621-SAFE (7233)  
General Inquiries: (604) 273-2266 Fax: (604) 276-3247  
After hours safety and health emergency reporting: (604) 273-7711; 1-888-621-SAFE (7233)  
Web Site: <http://www.worksafebc.com/>  
Contact List/Regional Offices: [http://www.worksafebc.com/contact\\_us/regional\\_locations/default.asp](http://www.worksafebc.com/contact_us/regional_locations/default.asp)



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