

# Work **Safe!** Bulletin

## SAFETY & HEALTH IN THE GARMENT MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

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Whether a factory manufactures jeans, shirts, skirts, sweaters, outerwear, or leather gloves, the Workplace Safety and Health Act and its accompanying Regulations apply to all. These workplaces have many things in common, including safety and health issues. The following points highlight some information and issues in the workplace which will assist in making Garment Manufacturing workplaces safe and healthy.



### 1. Compressed Air Not To Be Used for Personal Cleaning:

Cleaning materials and equipment with compressed air is **DANGEROUS**. **COMPRESSED AIR MUST NEVER BE DIRECTED TOWARDS YOURSELF OR OTHERS AND COMPRESSED AIR SHOULD NEVER BE USED FOR CLEANING YOUR WORK CLOTHES.**

It may appear that using compressed air for cleaning is relatively harmless. However, injuries have often occurred to workers, especially to the eyes and ears. This results from materials and particles being blown into the eyes and ears at great pressures. For further information, refer to Worksafe Bulletin #150 - "Using Compressed Air For Cleaning."

### 2. Safeguards on Single-Needle Sewing Machines:

Workers' Compensation Board statistics indicate that a large number of injuries occur as a result of the operators' fingers making contact with sewing machine needles. It is a requirement that garment factories install and use needleguards on single-needle sewing machines. The employer is responsible for ensuring that appropriate guards are installed and that workers use these safeguards. Once installed, needleguards **ARE NOT TO BE REMOVED** by the operators.

### 3. Footwear:

Workers not wearing proper footwear are faced with the risk for injury as a result of slips and falls, contact with materials such as heavy bolts of fabric, hot irons, scissors, needles etc. It is a requirement that workplaces implement a Footwear Policy ensuring all workers wear the appropriate footwear.

### 4. Noise:

Manitoba Regulation 227/94 requires that Manitoba workers not be exposed to noise at levels damaging to hearing. Hearing conservation measures must begin whenever workers are exposed to more than 80 decibels for a significant period. In general, if you can't understand a loud voice from a distance of one meter (one yard) because of background sound, you're likely exceeding 80 decibels. If this appears to be the case in your workplace, sound level measurements, hearing tests, training, and other requirements must be arranged by your employer.

### 5. Working in Hot Environments:

During the summer months, workers in factories without air conditioning systems can face high temperatures. Excessive heat exposure may result in workers developing heat-related illnesses. Employers are expected to deal with worker exposure to hot environments as part of their overall responsibility to provide a safe and healthy workplace. Employers should be working with their safety and health committees in preparing a Hot Weather Plan for their workplace. The following informational material on this topic is available from Workplace Safety and Health: Bulletin entitled "Worker Discomfort & Increased Temperatures" - Worksafe Bulletin #133 - also translated into Cantonese, Punjabi, and Vietnamese; and a guideline called "Guidelines For Work in Hot Environments".

### 6. Joint Safety and Health Committees

(Workplaces with 20 or more employees)

#### **Worker Representatives**

(Workplaces with at least 10 but less than 20 employees):

A Joint Safety and Health Committee is required at a workplace with twenty or more workers. A Worker Safety and Health Representative must be designated at any workplace where there are at least 10 (but less than 20) people regularly employed. Safety and Health Committees are required to meet at least four times a year and Minutes of these meetings must be submitted to the Workplace Safety and Health Branch.

Safety and Health Committee members are entitled to two days of paid educational leave (up to a maximum of 16 hours) per year for the purpose of attending safety and health related training.

**Who is responsible for ensuring all of the above, and that other safety and health legislated requirements, are implemented and enforced at the workplace?**

**Under the Workplace Safety and Health Act the employer bears the primary responsibility for the safety, health and welfare of all workers at the workplaces. The Workplace Safety and Health Act also states that workers are also responsible for participating in achieving safety and health in their workplace. Adopting a team effort involving management, workers, and your safety and health committee, will go a long way to achieving a safe and healthy workplace!**