



SAFE WORK

S
A
F
E

SPOT THE HAZARD
ASSESS THE RISK
FIND A SAFER WAY
EVERYDAY

No. 193

January 2003

Your Right to Refuse Dangerous Work

*Workplace safety and health is everyone's concern and everyone's right.
You can refuse dangerous work and your right to do so is protected by law.*

Hazards in the Workplace

At any time in your working life, you may encounter work involving safety and health risks that are not normal for the job. Hazards and dangerous situations should immediately be reported to your supervisor in order to prevent an injury or illness. In most cases, the situation is resolved by eliminating the hazard. If the situation is not rectified, you can exercise your right to refuse work.

What is the Right to Refuse?

Under the law, (Manitoba's Workplace Safety and Health Act), you can refuse any task that you have reasonable grounds to believe is dangerous to your safety and health or the safety and health of others. (The work refusal is initiated by the worker.)

Section 43(1) of the Act states: "A worker may refuse to work or do particular work at a workplace if he or she believes on reasonable grounds that the work constitutes a danger to his or her safety or health or to the safety or health of another worker or another person."

Remember... you may not be disciplined for exercising your right to refuse in good faith, and you are entitled to the same wages and benefits that you would have received had the refusal not taken place. Your employer may also re-assign you temporarily to alternate work while the situation is being remedied. Stay at your workplace for your normal working hours unless your employer gives you permission to leave.

What is Dangerous Work?

"Dangerous" work generally means: work involving safety and health risks that are not normal for the job.

What Are the Steps Involved?

Step 1

Report immediately to your supervisor, or to any other person in charge at the workplace, giving your reasons for refusing to work. At this point, the refusing worker and supervisor must attempt to resolve the concern.

If the employer resolves the matter to your satisfaction, go back to work. If you still believe the work is dangerous....

Step 2

If the supervisor and worker cannot resolve the refusal, the worker co-chairperson of the safety and health committee, or a committee member who represents workers (or a worker representative, if there is no committee), must be asked to help for the purpose of inspecting the workplace.

If the dangerous condition is not remedied after the inspection

Step 3

Any of the persons present during the inspection in STEP 2 may notify a safety and health officer of the refusal to work and the reasons for it. The safety and health officer will investigate the matter and decide whether the job situation or task the worker has refused constitutes a danger to the safety or health of the worker or any other worker or person at the workplace.

The officer will provide a written decision to the refusing worker, each co-chairperson, or the representative, and the employer. Anyone directly affected by an officer's decision may appeal it to the Director of the Workplace Safety and Health Division. The Director will make a decision about the appeal, and provide written reasons. The decision of the Director may be appealed to the Manitoba Labour Board.