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## **Workplace Safety and Health Program**

A workplace safety and health program is a systematic plan to identify and control hazards, and respond to emergencies. The program lays out responsibilities, resources, and procedures for keeping the workplace safe and healthy. Its objective is to integrate safety and health into all work practices and conditions.

Section 7.4(1) of the *Workplace Safety and Health Act* requires employers to establish a written workplace safety and health program for each workplace regularly employing 20 or more workers. The program must be designed in consultation with the workplace safety and health committee, and made available to persons employed at the workplace, the committee, and Safety and Health Officers upon request.

### **Content of Program**

*A workplace safety and health program must include:*

#### **1. Policy Statement**

A workplace safety and health policy is a statement of principles and general guidelines that govern your safety and health actions. (It should tell employees and others at work sites about your commitment to safety and health.)

#### **2. Hazard Identification and Control**

Section 7.4(5)(b) of *The Workplace Safety and Health Act* requires employers to have a system to identify and control hazards. The system must: a) identify known and potential dangers to workers, and enable workers to bring forward concerns about hazards; b) assess the associated risks (i.e. is there a risk of permanent disability, temporary disabling injury, etc.); and c) implement measures to eliminate or control the hazards. (These measures may include redesigning a work process, substituting a safe chemical for a hazardous one, buying new equipment, or using other controls such as machine guards and noise enclosures, etc.)

#### **3. People and Resources Required in Emergencies**

You must have a plan that identifies the resources required (including personnel and equipment) to respond to an emergency at the workplace. Your program must also: a) identify situations that could produce emergencies; b) have a written fire safety plan, and a plan to deal with chemical spills, where needed; and c) identify emergency training requirements.

#### **4. Statement of Responsibility**

Employers, supervisors, and workers are all legally responsible for safety and health in the workplace. Everyone must be individually accountable for carrying out his or her responsibilities.

Put responsibilities for safety and health into every job description in the organization. (Make specific managers and supervisors accountable for implementing each program element. For example, name the employee(s) responsible for ordering safety equipment, managing maintenance, and supplying the resources required for work to be done safely.)

#### **5. Inspection Schedule**

The employer must schedule regular inspections of the workplace and of work processes and procedures to find hazards and potential hazards. The work performed determines what requires inspecting and when inspections should be conducted.

Identify what must be looked at during each type of inspection. (Supervisors and workers usually know what should be inspected in their work areas. Other information can be obtained from equipment vendors, maintenance records, industry publications, standards, internal reports, etc.)

## **6. Develop Plans to Control Chemical and Biological Hazards**

Develop a plan for the control of any biological or chemical substance that is used, produced, stored, or disposed of at the workplace. Your plan should address how appropriate information about hazards will be obtained and communicated to workers.

Standard hazard control techniques should be used to identify, assess, and control these hazards. Use the resulting information to develop safe work procedures.

## **7. Develop a Plan to Safeguard Contracted Employer(s) or Self-Employed Person(s) at Your Workplace**

In order to deal with the safety and health risks associated with the work of contracted employers or self-employed persons, your program must have a system for evaluating, selecting, and monitoring the safety and health performance of outside companies or self-employed persons with whom you contract to do certain jobs in your workplace.

## **8. Training Plan for Workers and Supervisors**

Develop a plan for training workers and supervisors in safe work practices and procedures. The plan must determine how safety and health training will be developed and delivered, and by whom. It must be designed to begin with new worker orientation and/or when a worker changes job duties and responsibilities, as well as when new equipment, processes or procedures are introduced into the workplace. (Training must cover any topic relevant to the safety and health of the worker, including: how to do specific work tasks, emergency procedures, first aid facilities, restricted areas, hazard protection, etc.)

Supervisors need all of the instruction given to workers, as well as training in: relevant sections of the Act and regulations; elements of the workplace safety and health program, including roles, duties and responsibilities; safety around chemical and biological substances; the need for personal protective equipment; emergency procedures; coaching and motivation; and any other matters necessary to ensure the safety and health of workers under their direction.

## **9. Procedures for Investigating Accidents, Dangerous Occurrences and Work Refusals**

Investigations of accidents and dangerous occurrences provide valuable information needed to prevent similar incidents in the future. Investigation procedures for accidents and dangerous occurrences should state: the objective of your investigation (find and correct root causes); who investigates what (type of) incidents; type of training the investigators will receive; who receives written investigation reports; who follows up on corrective action; who maintains documents and records, etc.

Your program must also include a procedure for investigating work refusals. (Section 43 of the Act allows the internal workplace system to investigate, enabling the employer to take sufficient steps to deal with the worker's concerns. If necessary, the workplace safety and health committee worker co-chair must investigate and advise the worker; and if the matter has yet to be resolved after the committee's involvement, a workplace safety and health officer should be contacted.)

## **10. Develop a Strategy to Involve Workers**

All employees need to be involved in your efforts to prevent injuries and occupational illnesses. Workers must be familiar with your program, know their rights and responsibilities, and understand how to handle concerns. Your program should encourage workers to suggest ways to make the workplace safer and healthier, knowing that their concerns/suggestions will be taken seriously and they will not be subjected to reprisals. (Your program must also address how the workplace safety and health committee will be kept effective.)

## **11. Evaluate and Revise your Program Regularly**

Develop a procedure to address how your program will be reviewed and revised; when it will be done, and who will do it.

Your program must be completely reviewed every three years. (Full or partial reviews and revision are required when there are changes in the workplace that may affect the safety and health of workers, or when defects are discovered. Changes include introduction of new technology, production methods, discovery of new risks associated with existing conditions, etc. Defects may be identified through inspections, systematic audits, or investigations of incidents.)