



# SAFE WORK



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## Temporary / Agency Workers in Healthcare - Employer Responsibilities

Temporary workers (employed by temporary placement agencies) hired by healthcare service providers in facilities, programs and community services are at risk of injuring themselves and/or others while performing tasks without sufficient training, supervision, or instruction on safe work procedures.

In many cases, temporary placement agencies rely on the employer at the work site to provide the workers with workplace orientation; verify they have the appropriate skills to perform the job(s); and provide them with job-specific (including safety and health) training.

*Unfortunately, this does not always happen.* Additional mis-communication may exist where there is more than one employer at the work site (for example, more than one agency/contracting company providing food services, housekeeping, vacation relief, etc.), with each assuming the other will provide worker orientation, training, and job instruction.

As a result, agency / contracted workers may be unaware of the hazards present at the work site as well as those hazards particular to their assigned tasks, placing them at increased risk of suffering a work-related injury or illness.

*Under workplace safety and health law in Manitoba, an agency/contracted worker has two employers – the temporary placement agency, and the employer at the work site.* Both employers have legal responsibilities regarding the occupational safety and health of the agency / contracted worker, as follows.

**Employers that hire temporary workers bear the greatest responsibility for ensuring the safety and health of the workers at their workplace. They are required to ensure that temporary workers:**

- Receive a workplace orientation, including: location of emergency exits, first aid kits, eye wash equipment, a review of emergency procedures, evacuation plans, and workplace rules.
- Receive task specific training, including safe work procedures, and job related hazard information (e.g. safe lift, transfer and repositioning training; training related to chemical and biological hazards in the workplace).
- Are provided with appropriate tools and personal protective equipment to perform their job in a safe manner (e.g. respirator fit testing to prevent exposures)
- Receive competent supervision (and know who to report concerns to)
- Understand the work they are assigned to perform, and well as the work they are not to perform (e.g. workers not to operate powered lift equipment (mechanical lifts) unless trained by the employer at the workplace). Training is not transferable from one workplace to another. Each company must train the worker on their equipment, hazards and safe operating procedures, and evaluate worker competency before the worker is allowed to operate that equipment.

**Temporary Placement Agencies are responsible for ensuring that temporary workers receive sufficient initial occupational safety and health information and training in preparation for the job site and task. They are required to ensure that:**

- Workers receive an initial safety and health orientation so that they can identify common hazards at the workplace they will be sent to.
- Workers receive an orientation of the agency's safety and health related programs, policies and procedures (e.g. a working alone plan between the agency and worker must be in place and communicated to the worker).
- They (agency) conduct an initial assessment of the work site, and ensure controls are in place to prevent undue harm to their workers.
- Workers receive a workplace orientation and job specific training (including safe work procedures) from the company they are being placed with. It would be good practice to ensure that each temporary/agency worker is assigned to a senior worker at the workplace work who can provide guidance (e.g. Supervisor, Lead hand, Charge Nurse, Senior Worker, etc).
- Workers fully understand and can demonstrate safe work practices for the tasks they will be assigned to.
- Workers have had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the policies, procedures, and safety and health programs at each jobsite they attend.
- Workers are aware of their responsibility to follow the workplace safety and health rules and safe work procedures at each job site and for each job task.
- Workers understand that they must receive appropriate training for all tasks (e.g. operation of equipment, respirator fit testing, pre-authorization to conduct required duties, etc.).
- Workers understand the work they are sent to perform; their right to ask questions about the work they are assigned to do; and their right to refuse work they believe is unsafe.
- Workers are capable of performing the job. For instance, a worker with lifting restrictions due to a medical condition should not be tasked to move or lift heavy items, conduct unsafe patient lifts, transfers or repositioning.

**Definition:** "workplace" means any building, site, workshop, structure, mine, mobile vehicle, or any other premises or location whether indoors or outdoors in which one or more workers, or self-employed persons, are engaged in work or have worked.

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