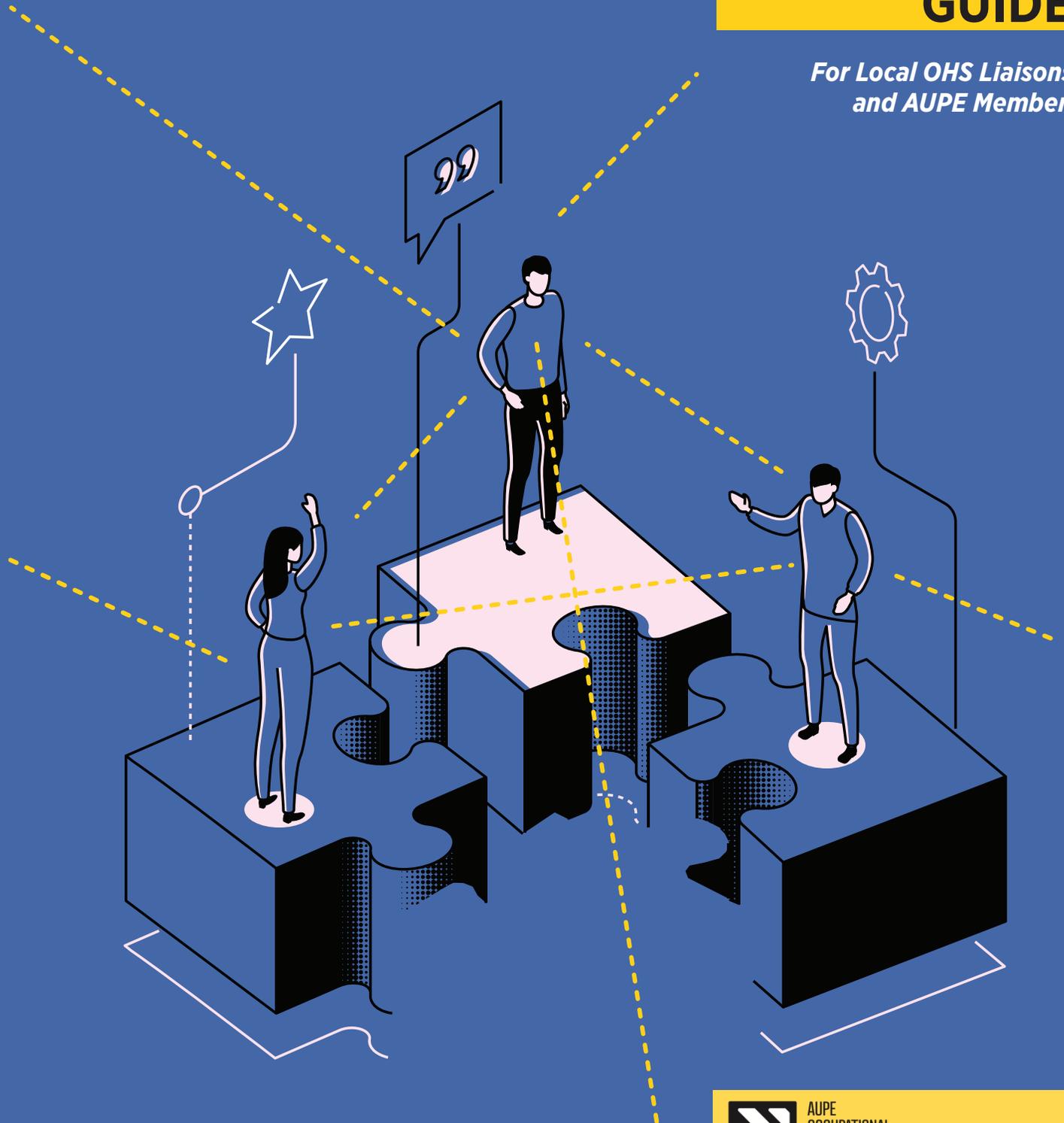


AUPEducation

OHS QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

*For Local OHS Liaisons
and AUPE Members*



AUPE
OCCUPATIONAL
HEALTH & SAFETY
COMMITTEE



WHAT THIS BOOKLET IS ABOUT

This guide explains how you can fulfill the duties of the Local OHS Liaison position at AUPE.

The booklet also contains useful resources that will help any AUPE member take action to address workplace health and safety concerns. “OHS Advocates” are what we call ordinary people who get involved in the struggle for safer workplaces. You can do this by exercising worker safety rights.

Using this workbook will help you meet the minimum requirements of the Local OHS Liaison position. It also suggests how you can go beyond the basics. You can help mobilize your co-workers and fellow union members. Together, you can hold your employer accountable to legal obligations to protect your physical and psychological health and safety.

Whether you are new to the role of Local OHS Liaison, want to brush up on how to communicate about health and safety, or find some handy resources, this booklet will help you.

AUPE encourages all members to take labour education courses. Local OHS Liaisons should take the OHS courses available through AUPE to familiarize themselves with OHS on the worksite, including: the rights of workers, legislation, and the functions of a joint health and safety committee.

AUPE offers three OHS courses:

1. *Introduction to OHS,*
2. *OHS for Union Activists,*
3. *Advanced OHS Advocate.*

Register for your next AUPE course at: www.aupe.org/training.

This booklet was updated in Spring 2023. The previous version was Fall 2020.

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“The fights against mandatory overtime, increased workloads, downsizing and privatization are all fights for the health and safety of our members.”

- Nancy Lessin, Health and Safety Coordinator of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO

DISCOVER THE HISTORY OF HEALTH AND SAFETY AT AUPE

AUPE has a long tradition of standing up for what today we understand is occupational health and safety. AUPE began as the Civil Service Association of Alberta (CSA) in 1919. At that time, precious little protected workers on the job. Only a few provincial laws existed to regulate specific industries. By 1917, Alberta had implemented its first Factory Act. However, there were not enough inspectors to enforce the rules, and most workplaces and entire towns were excluded.

In its bulletins, the CSA wrote about the “physical and mental strain” its members faced. It advocated for “protection” and “welfare.” At the CSA’s 18th Convention, President W. T. Aiken lamented:



“A considerable proportion of our membership is composed of attendants at various institutions. We have from year to year declared by resolution our conviction that these employees were filling positions of importance and responsibility, that their work was hazardous and trying in the extreme, and that the salaries paid for trained and efficient attendants was far from being commensurate with the duties performed, and that the hours worked were such as to cause an undue strain upon their physical and mental condition.”

Over the years, the CSA politely raised concerns to the government about various issues. It pointed out overcrowding and understaffing in jails and mental hospitals. It expressed disappointment about limitations of the Workmen’s Compensation Board. In the 1950s, the CSA petitioned the government to address comfort and safety in the new buildings constructed for the rapidly growing number of public employees. The association achieved important benefits contributing to its members’ wellbeing, like health insurance, a five-day workweek, and sick leave.

It took decades for OHS to finally become the crucial topic it is today. In the 1960s, a new OHS movement began in North America, supported by two other social movements. The environmental movement questioned the long-term health effects of chemicals. The civil rights movement made people more aware of the rights of individuals. Workers began demanding more control over their lives.

Eventually, a spirit of reform also swept through Alberta. In 1971, Albertans elected the Progressive Conservative (PC) party led by Peter Lougheed, ending 36 years of Social Credit rule. For their part, provincial employees were growing fed up with the government treating them as public “servants.” They wanted similar recognition as workers in other industries, including the right to strike. Correctional officers staged the CSA’s first wildcat strike. Other members took job actions as well. The CSA grappled with reorganizing itself as a new union.

Just next door in Saskatchewan, a freshly elected New Democratic Party (NDP) government appointed Bob Sass to lead its industrial relations branch. He fervently promoted the “Three Rs” of worker safety rights (the rights to *know*, to *participate*, and to *refuse unsafe work*). Sass helped Saskatchewan pass Canada’s first modern Occupational Health and Safety Act, in 1972. It made OHS a joint responsibility of employer and employees, in what is called the “internal responsibility system.”

In 1973, Alberta's government appointed an Industrial Health and Safety Commission to conduct a study of policies and programs. The commission released its report in 1975. Known as the Gale Report, it recommended forming joint OHS committees at individual work sites, similar to the committees that Saskatchewan had just legislated province- wide. Instead, Alberta's government stalled, and watered down Gale's original recommendations. Worksite OHS committees were shelved.

Within weeks, at its 1975 Convention, the CSA approved forming its own OHS standing committee and hiring an "OHS Investigator." The committee met for the first time in June 1976, the same year the CSA became AUPE. It purchased copies of Jeanne Stellman's landmark book, "Work Is Dangerous For Your Health," and it made a policy statement. The new union hired Dennis Malayko in October 1977 as its health and safety officer. Malayko would spend the next forty years dedicated to safety advocacy and worker health. AUPE's OHS work was only just beginning.

Since offering its first OHS course in 1977, AUPE has trained thousands of members about workplace hazards and how to hold their employer accountable under the law. Starting in 1985, AUPE began observing an annual "Day of Mourning" ceremony for workers killed or injured on the job. The union lobbied the government to officially recognize the April 28 ceremony, which it did in 1989.

Gradually, AUPE negotiated for joint OHS committees with many employers. It hosted its first OHS conference in 2001, and called on the province to step up proactive enforcement and hire more OHS officers. In 2013, AUPE lent its support to a province-wide wildcat strike of correctional officers. They were angry about the suspension of two of their own for voicing safety concerns at the new Edmonton Remand Centre.

In 2015, Albertans elected an NDP government led by Rachel Notley. Notley's government legislated the first substantial improvements to Alberta's OHS law since it was first passed in 1976. In reality, the changes only caught Alberta up to other provinces. Many of those worker-friendly protections have since been rolled back. In 2019, the United Conservative Party (UCP) of Jason Kenney won power. It used its large majority in the legislature to weaken employment standards and OHS rules, labeling them as 'red tape' and claiming they interfere with employers' ability to create jobs.

Canadian unions were early to adopt the canary in the coal mine as a symbol for occupational health and safety, including when the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) established the first day of mourning for workers killed on the job in 1984. That's because since the late 1800s, miners used caged Canaries to detect poisonous gases underground. Carbon monoxide would kill the bird before it harmed the miners, signaling to them the urgent need to evacuate. This old CUPE poster suggested *workers are the canaries in their workplaces.*



“Our children must be made to realize that their forefathers labored under pitiful and dangerous conditions and finally raised up to shed oppression and gain their dignity. These children are the beneficiaries of these struggles.”

– Fred Kaltenstein, American Postal Workers Union

AUPE'S OHS COMMITTEE AND THE LOCAL OHS LIAISON POSITION

An important goal of AUPE's standing OHS committee is to inform and educate members about OHS. This is a challenging task. AUPE has a large number of members working in diverse occupations. They are spread out across the province in 33 different Locals.

To help meet its goals, the OHS Committee relies on an elected member from each Local to regularly communicate, both up the chain to the union's central committee, and down the chain to rank and file members and frontline workers. As the word "liaison" implies, the purpose of this position is to foster cooperation and closer relationships between regular AUPE members and the OHS standing committee.

Beginning in 2011, the AUPE OHS Standing Committee chaired at the time by Vice- President Erez Raz attempted to amend AUPE's Constitution to create this new component position. They felt there was a need for Locals to have a dedicated member elected to focus on OHS issues.

Their Resolution 1-3 to create the OHS Liaison position was defeated at Convention 2011. Steadfast, the OHS Committee was determined to try again. Renumbered as 1-10, the resolution was presented the following year, but it failed to reach the floor. It was left as unfinished business at the next two annual conventions.

Finally, at Convention 2014, they succeeded. Article 18 of AUPE's Constitution was changed to create the new position. But the goal of communicating with members remains a challenge. Liaisons require support to fulfill their role.

In November 2018, AUPE's OHS committee and former Chair, Vice-President James, Hart brought the OHS Liaisons together for the first time for a dedicated training session. Liaisons often also attend AUPE's Day of Mourning ceremony. At the 2019 ceremony they participated in a special training workshop.

Stay up-to-date with AUPE's OHS Committee. Find valuable resources posted on their website. To access meeting minutes, contact the chairperson.

<https://www.aupe.org/about/committees/occupational-health-safety-committee>



DUTIES OF LOCAL OHS LIAISONS

AUPE's Constitution describes the position of Local OHS Liaisons (often referred to simply as "Liaisons" for short). The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the position provide further detail about the role.

AUPE's Constitution is the text that establishes the foundational principals and composition of the union. The Liaisons are described at section 18.03 c).

Access the Constitution at <https://www.aupe.org/about/constitution>.

AUPE's OHS Committee developed the Terms of Reference for the Local OHS Liaisons in 2018. They further define the purpose and scope of the position.

Access the Terms of Reference letter at <https://bit.ly/3beuB6z>.

As the Local OHS Liaison, your basic duties are to:

- i. Attend the meetings of the Local Occupational Health and Safety sub-committee;
- ii. Report in writing at least once per year to the Occupational Health and Safety Standing Committee, the health and safety concerns of the Local;
- iii. Report in writing at least three (3) times yearly to the members of the Local Council on the execution of their duties;
- iv. Represent the interest of all members of the Union; and
- v. Be a worksite contact.



Your specific duties are very narrow. You can accomplish them by attending your Local Council meetings and staying in regular contact with AUPE's Standing OHS Committee.

Submit your annual report to the committee using this online form:

<https://bit.ly/3u401bR>

Each member of AUPE's standing OHS Committee is assigned to roughly three or four Local OHS Liaisons. Try to talk periodically with the person assigned to you.

Perhaps the real challenge in fulfilling your duties as Local OHS Liaison lies in answering the question "What should we communicate *about*?"

Your duty to "represent the interest of all union members" is very broad and wide. It gives you **the opportunity to take the actions that will be most meaningful to you and your co-workers.**

The rest of this booklet describes how to grow as a union activist in general, and as an OHS Advocate in particular. There are many ways you can mobilize union members and supporters, build solidarity, and defend our rights. At the end of the day, your goal should be to prepare yourself and others to stand up and fight back.

OHS ACTIVISM 101 – HEALTH AND SAFETY ACTIONS

To go above and beyond in your role as OHS Liaison or OHS Advocate, here are a few examples of things you might consider doing:

- Have one-to-one conversations about health and safety with ten co-workers, or with AUPE members at other work sites.
- Host a lunch'n'learn or grab'n'go to gather OHS concerns and share OHS information. Use the index cards in this booklet or make your own.
- File an OHS complaint with your employer's head office or with the government. To file a complaint with Alberta Labour's OHS Contact Centre or get the support of an OHS officer, call 1-866-415-8690 (or 780-415-8690 in Edmonton). <https://www.alberta.ca/file-complaint-online.aspx>.
- For greater impact, make mass phone calls. Get your co-workers or the members of an affected AUPE Chapter to call in the same complaint.
- Join your joint health and safety committee (JHSC). If you don't have one, start working towards getting one set up. If your committee has problems functioning effectively, contact AUPE for support.
- Stay in regular contact with the AUPE members sitting on any and all joint health and safety committees (JHSC) in your Local. Gather information from them.
- Put a health and safety issue on your Local's next meeting agenda. Or request that "health and safety" be a permanent part of all union meetings.
- Invite the members of another Chapter to meet with you. Help them map out workplace hazards and discuss what you can do together about the problem. Report about your meetings back to the Local and AUPE's OHS standing committee.
- Propose improved health and safety language to your Negotiating Team for your bargaining unit's next ongoing proposal. Research the language you need.
- Attend a rally or organize one. Hold a rally or an information picket. Use a public protest and a picket line to publicize your anger about an unresolved OHS issue.
- Start a local Day of Mourning ceremony in your home town. Use April 28 to educate workers about their safety rights and renew the OHS struggle.
- Mentor up-and-coming workplace activists to learn about OHS. Ask others to take AUPE OHS courses and become OHS Advocates. www.aupe.org/training.
- Ask others to attend your Local's Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- Ask a co-worker to review their hazard assessment (HIAC) document with you.

EXPLAIN OHS LEGISLATION TO CO-WORKERS

A web of rules limits your employer's right to manage. Those rules are found in your collective agreement and in labour legislation. Knowing the rules helps you to hold your employer accountable. It is one tool in the toolkit of every OHS activist.

Historically, these rules developed as governments acknowledged the unequal power relationship between workers and their employers. The rules are intended to create a greater degree of balance, and to protect workers. In Canada, governments have passed OHS laws since the time of Ontario's *Factory Act* of 1884. OHS legislation is meant of course to reduce workplace injuries, by recognizing rights, and imposing duties upon both workers and employers.

In Alberta, the provincial government regulates most workplaces and covers most workers with the **Occupational Health and Safety Act**. But, about 10% of Alberta's workforce is covered instead by the OHS provisions in the federal government's *Canada Labour Code*. This includes employees of the federal government and workers in inter-provincial industries, like banking, telecommunications, cross-border transport, and uranium mining.

Legislation frequently changes. You must be aware to always work with the most current version of legislation. Also remember that workers and their unions will remain in struggle – and you should continue to demand improvements to legislation, rights and workplace protections.

Alberta's OHS legislation is organized in three levels, according to who has authority to make changes, and what the content covers.

Three Levels	Authority to Change	Content
Act	Legislature	Defines Obligations and Rights of Different Parties.
Regulation	Cabinet	Describes Broad Provisions for Most Alberta Workplaces.
Code	Minister of Labour	Provides Technical Requirements, often for specific kinds of work.

You can answer many questions about workplace health and safety using a blue OHS Handbook from the King's Printer. The OHS handbook is a compilation of the Act, Regulation and Code. It's a helpful resource to bring with you to safety meetings. It shows the employer you mean business and know your stuff!



At first, the legislation might seem intimidating or overwhelming. But like anything, the more you explore it and practice using it, the easier it gets.

Most of the rules you need to consult can be found in the OHS Act and the Code.

One advantage of accessing the legislation electronically is that you can quickly keyword search it. Use your device to download the law from these links.

KING'S PRINTER

<https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/O02P2.pdf>

https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/documents/OHS/OHSCodeDecember_2021.pdf

ALBERTA LABOUR

<http://www.alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code.aspx>

Follow these keystrokes to **search a PDF or HTML text**.

PC, press [Ctrl + F]

Mac, press [Command + F]

Android phone or tablet, touch the [Action Menu vertical ellipsis / three vertical dots] and then touch [Find in page]

On iPhone or iPad Safari browser, touch the [Share] icon , Then the [Find in page] icon .

Type in your search term, like “First Aid”, for example.

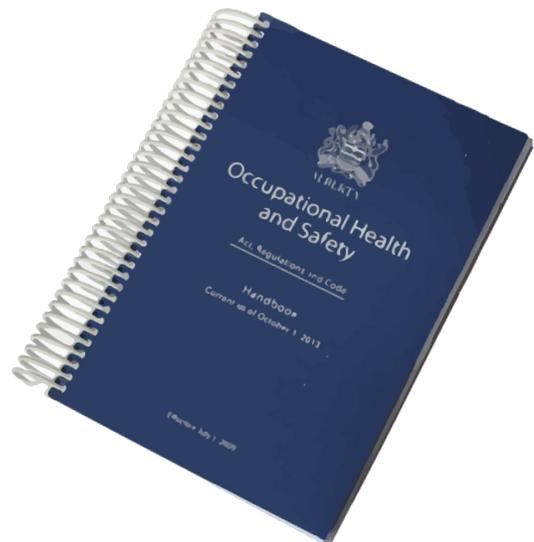
Whether you use a hard copy like the blue OHS handbook from the King’s Printer or electronic files, make sure you’re using the most up-to-date version available of the legislation.

For legislation and information regarding Workers’ Compensation, visit <https://www.wcb.ab.ca/> or download the WCB app.



The OHS Code changed March 31, 2023.

See what’s new at <https://tinyurl.com/3sr9mm7r> or by scanning the QR code.



KNOW YOUR SAFETY RIGHTS

Health and safety activists educate their fellow workers about our safety rights. Workers and unions fought for and won these safety rights. Often, we refer to only the first three rights (“three Rs”) because they were the ones workers demanded and won first. The fourth right is like a bonus. A reference to the applicable section of *Alberta’s Occupational Health and Safety Act* is written in brackets beneath each right.



1. **Right to know** – Workers have a right to know about the hazards they face in their workplaces. While some hazards are obvious, others like biological and chemical hazards often are not. Your employer must provide you training, a hazard assessment for your job, and make available safety data sheets (SDS).

[OHS Act, sections 2(d)(i), 3(2), 4(a, b), OHS Code part 2 sections 7 and 8]



2. **Right to participate** – Workers have the right to meaningfully participate in workplace health and safety activities. You can express concerns, and should have a say in decisions that affect their health and safety. You can participate in a Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC), and be involved in hazard identification, assessment, and control (HIAC).

[OHS Act, section 2(d)(ii), OHS Code part 2, section 8 and part 13]



3. **Right to refuse** – Workers have the right to refuse unsafe work. It represents one of the few instances when workers can disobey their employer. Workers can now only refuse unsafe work when it poses an “undue hazard.” This means the hazard must be serious and an immediate threat. To properly exercise your right to refuse dangerous work, you should promptly report your refusal and the reason to your supervisor or employer. It’s best if you also communicate with your co-workers and report your refusal to AUPE and to the Alberta OHS Contact Centre.

[OHS Act section 2(d)(iii) and Part 3, section 17]



4. **Right to be free from reprisal** – Workers have the right to exercise their safety rights without being subject to discrimination or retaliation. It is illegal for employers to threaten workers or adversely change the conditions of their employment because they have refused unsafe work or otherwise exercised safety rights. The first three safety rights are only meaningful if workers do not feel afraid they will be fired, lose pay, or be withheld a promotion.

[OHS Act section 18]

exercise
YOUR RIGHTS

“There is this myth: ‘knowledge is power.’ But the problem with that is it isn’t true. You have rights and you may even know about them, but you have to have power before you can exercise those rights. When people come together, you can take collective action and move things forward. Without collective power, we don’t have hope for change.”

- Jared Matsunaga-Turnbull, Executive Director
Alberta Workers’ Health Centre

HOW BILL 47 MADE WORKPLACES LESS SAFE

In 2017, the New Democratic Party introduced Bill 30: “*An Act to Protect the Health and Wellbeing of Working Albertans.*” The changes to Occupational Health and Safety and Worker’s Compensation caught Alberta up with the norms found elsewhere in Canada.

But, on December 9, 2020, the last day of the government’s fall sitting, the United Conservative Party ran the legislature until 3 o’clock in the morning and used its majority powers to shut down debate. That night, the UCP passed Bill 47 into law.

The so-called “*Ensuring Safety and Cutting Red Tape Act*” made significant cuts and rollbacks to both OHS and WCB. In short, former Premier Jason Kenney and Minister of Labour Jason Copping did the following:

-  **Cut funding for research and education on injury prevention.**
-  **Made joint health and safety committees less effective and useful.**
-  **Weakened your right to refuse unsafe work.**
-  **Cut OHS program requirements, exempted employers from rules, and reduced enforcement.**
-  **Cut compensation to injured workers.**

Do you want **more details** about what Bill 47 changed? Learn more in these ways:

- ✓ Read AUPE’s Dec. 2020 fact sheet “Bill 47: Frequently Asked Questions”
<https://www.aupe.org/news/news-and-updates/bill-47-frequently-asked-questions>
- ✓ Read the excellent two-part series on the Parkland Institute website:
https://www.parklandinstitute.ca/tags/bill_47
- ✓ Watch two webinar recordings by our friends from the AFL and AWHC: “Bill 47: What it means for your safety at work”, 37 min: <https://tinyurl.com/nhct6hsc>
- ✓ “Bill 47: Workers’ Compensation Changes”, 26 min: <https://tinyurl.com/2tuahs3p>
- ✓ View a table comparing OHS law before and after 2021: <https://tinyurl.com/vs3v54yy>

JOINT HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEES

One of the main ways Alberta's OHS system is meant to protect workers is through Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSCs). The idea behind such committees is to combine the job-specific knowledge of workers with the broader perspective of managers. Individual workers are supposed to report hazards and OHS concerns to the JHSC. In turn, committee members make recommendations to the employer.

Alberta's OHS legislation establishes rules for how a JHSC is established, the duties, membership, terms of office, meetings, and other requirements. Refer to the OHS Code, Part 13. Note, Bill 47 from 2020 (discussed on page 12) badly weakened joint committees and reduced the opportunity for workers to meaningfully participate.

In the past, joint committees were required to undertake at least ten important activities, like: formally inspecting the worksite, participating in hazard assessments, developing measures to protect people, investigating injuries and incidents, and maintaining records. Now, the law requires the committee to fulfill only four duties. This means collective agreements in unionized workplaces are very important, providing standards that should exceed minimum requirements in legislation. Additionally, every JHSC should have terms of reference, a document describing the procedures and practices of the committee.

The Employer is responsible for setting up the committee, which is made up of representatives of the employer and workers. Workers select their own representatives. In unionized work settings, members from different unions may be represented. While JHSCs can make recommendations, OHS legislation empowers the employer to determine how to control such hazards. In this way, JHSCs are advisory committees rather than decision-making committees.

Some people criticize JHSCs and the entire internal responsibility system because of this. They believe JHSCs give governments an excuse to avoid policing employers or enforcing the law. Still others feel that JHSCs create a bureaucratic channel for diffusing concerns of workers, undermining their efforts to organize for power in the workplace.

Still, it's important that workers and their unions at least attempt to make the OHS system function as its intended. We need to take the high road and show employers we're reasonable, credible, and upholding our end of the deal. And if they fail to uphold their obligations, you'll be justified in taking direct action (See page 22) For this reason, we need workers like you to get involved and join health and safety committees.



The role of **Worker Representatives** on the joint health and safety committee (JHSC):

- Attend meetings (held at least quarterly) regularly.
- Prepare yourself for meetings by reviewing agenda items. Inspect the work site for hazards and meet with fellow worker reps before meeting with the Employer.
- Maintain records and take minutes to hold the Employer accountable.
- Help Employers respond to health and safety concerns and training programs.
- Participate in work site inspections and investigations.
- Aid in investigating worker reports of dangerous work and refusal to work.
- Assist with health and safety orientations for new employees.
- Offer recommendations to the Employer.

Employers, with respect to joint health and safety committees, must:

- Establish the committee.
- Provide work site health and safety committee co-chairs with training about the duties and functions of their role.
- Provide adequate resources, time and training to help committees and representatives function effectively.
- Hold meetings and carry out duties and functions during normal working hours.
- Post the names and contact information of committee members and representatives where it can be seen by all workers.

Meetings of JHSCs must adhere to the requirements outlined in Alberta's OHS legislation to be considered a valid meeting:

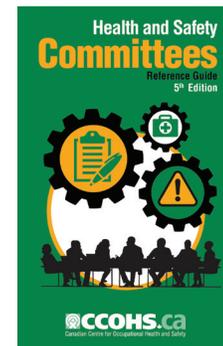
- JHSC members must within ten days after being established, and then once every quarter.
- Health and safety meetings and functions are to be carried out during normal work hours.
- Employers can't deduct wages for time spent in HSC meetings.
- Meeting minutes must be recorded and available for inspection by an HSC member or OHS Officer.
- Meetings must meet quorum in order for the committee to make decisions.

Are you interested in learning more about joint committees, or need a valuable resource because you're already a worker representative?

Health and Safety Committees Reference Guide, 2018 | CCOHS

Free PDF from AUPE here: <https://tinyurl.com/2mwyh9ve>

169 pages + invaluable appendices and checklists with all the material worker representatives of joint committees need to fulfill their duties and make their committee effective.



HAVE ONE-TO-ONE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT HEALTH AND SAFETY

If you want to get your fellow workers involved in health and safety, you will need to think like an organizer. So how do you think and talk like an organizer?

The first and most important action is to have one-to-one meetings. That means conversations with individual co-workers. One-to-ones are also sometimes called “organizing conversations.”

Like the name implies, an organizing conversation is not small talk about the weather or entertainment. One-to-ones are purposeful. Your aim is to listen. Try to understand the other person. It’s never enough to know what someone’s issue or concern is. What matters is why that issue is important to someone.

Once you understand, make connections. Lay the blame on the employer, and win support for a collective solution.

“It’s all about one-to-ones, and building relationships, and trust. Meeting people where they’re at. There is no magic bullet. Find out what peoples’ issues are, and find out why they’re scared and hesitant.”

– Rhiannon Rutherford, Shop Floor Activist, Canadian Union of Postal Workers

To keep people involved, you need to talk about the issues that matter to them. Why do your members care about what they do?

Remember, one-to-ones are the key action you take all the time to mobilize co-workers. You may have other specific goals. You may want to solve a problem the employer is causing, or pressure the employer to take action and resolve a health and safety complaint it is ignoring.

Regardless of what you’re trying to achieve, having good organizing conversations is the way to do it. Your goal is to get as many members involved as possible, and that happens face-to-face.



**SECRETS OF A
SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZER**

Download and print copies of a great tip sheet, “An Organizing Conversation,” from Labor Notes: Secrets of a Successful Organizer.

<https://www.labornotes.org/secrets/handouts>.

This network of union members and labour activists publish a magazine, website, books, conferences and workshops. They promote aggressive strategies to fight concessions and unions that are run by their members.

BRUSH UP ON THE A.E.I.O.U.S OF ORGANIZING

To remember how to have effective one-to-one conversations that mobilize your fellow workers, use the list of vowels in the Roman alphabet:

A – Agitate - pose questions that help your co-worker feel the impact of issues, and see that the employer is responsible.

“How’s the new schedule working for you?” “How is that affecting your family?” “Why didn’t the employer have a policy in place that prevented John’s injury?”

E – Educate - share beneficial information, and ask more questions that help the worker believe conditions can be changed, including ways that the problem could be solved. “Do you know what our collective agreement says about that?” “Who’s in a position to fix that?” “Why do you think we’re having this problem?”

I – Inoculate - ask questions that prepare the worker for the consequences of group action, like how the employer is likely to react.

“What do you think the supervisor will do if he finds out we’re trying to change this?”

O – Organize - make a plan to win, and ask for a commitment to take action.

“Most people want to go back to the old schedule. What if everyone signed a petition, and marched into the supervisor’s office together to deliver it?”

U – Unite or Push - follow through on the action, and follow up with the worker. “Will you sign this petition, and come with us on Thursday morning to deliver it?”

“Members make the best organizers. They understand what workers are going through and can communicate with them. They’ve done the job, and they know what it’s like.”

– Byron Silva, Coordinator, Laborers’ Easter Region Organizing Fund

REFLECT ON YOUR GOALS AND ON WHAT MATTERS TO THE WORKERS

1. What kinds of questions do you want to ask your co-workers? What will you say, to find out what matters to them?

2. What is one OHS issue you think could be improved by talking with co-workers about it, so people are on the same page?

3. What things do you want to say to your co-worker about the OHS issue or concern?

4. How will you persuade them to commit to your cause? To propose solutions? To take a specific action?

5. Try writing down a short story about your health and safety concern, framing it in the language of an organizing conversation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A WELL-ORGANIZED WORKSITE

Remember, workers are stronger when we work together. As a Local OHS Liaison, you need other people to join you. We call people who exercise their workplace safety rights “OHS Advocates.” Here are some tips to getting help and keeping everyone organized.

WORKSITE (SOCIAL) MAPPING

You should map out the existing networks in your workplace and identify the informal leaders and OHS Advocates in those networks.

Start by physically mapping your worksite. Label places where groups gather, like the break room. If it's possible, use a staff list. Also, identify which of your co-workers are union supporters. Who signed the last petition? Who reads the union bulletin board?

Using this information will help you identify who to may help you spread messages and get workers talking about OHS. Remember to share information with workers on other shifts or rotations. You need the entire worksite informed, not just your line or department.

To achieve, this you need to *ask others to help*. That's what your one-to-ones are for. Ask people to commit to an action and get involved.

FANOUTS

Be careful not to have one-to-one conversations on employer time. Make sure these conversations happen on breaks or before and after work. Use these conversations to get your fellow workers' contact information so you can follow up after hours.

These days, many people may use email lists or Facebook groups to share messages. Do NOT share information regarding direct actions on social media. Also, avoid writing insulting or negative remarks about management, as the information could be shared with them. Besides, you want to take the high road when dealing with management.

Share key information only over phone calls or during one-to-one conversations. By having contact information, you will be able to get in touch with other workers to spread the word about issues, actions, or to help coordinate other committees.

Labour Notes provides a great template for creating a worksite fanout called *Sketch out a Member Network*: <https://labornotes.org/secrets/handouts>. It's basically a phone tree.

LEAFLETS

Another great way to spread information on a worksite issue is to create leaflets for your fellow workers. By using leaflets, you can:

- Create an opportunity for conversations.
- Direct attention to your issue - When one worker sees another reading the leaflet, it gets people talking.
- Create a distribution network - The idea is for information to flow in all directions along this network, not just from the creator of the leaflet. This is a great way to spread information to OHS Advocates identified from worksite mapping.

It's important to ensure leaflets do NOT contain any information about a direct action and speak only to the worksite issue at hand. Leaflets should describe issues that you've already brought to the attention of your employer. With leaflets, you're trying to raise awareness about the ongoing issue, get support, and apply pressure.



IN-PERSON

WINTER/SPRING 2023
DIRECT
ACTION

AUPEducation

AUPE offers a course entirely about direct action and organizing your worksite. To register for Direct Action or other upcoming courses, visit: www.aupe.org/training.

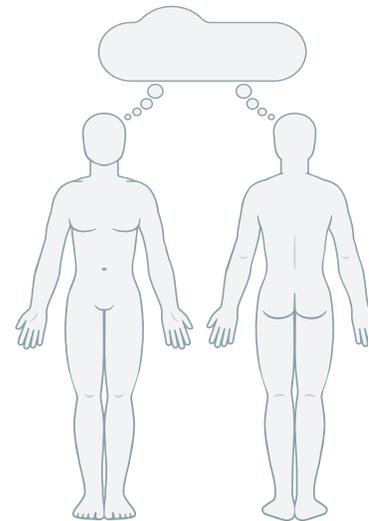
MAP HAZARDS IN THE WORKPLACE

One of the best ways to get workers involved in health and safety is to get them to map hazards in their workplace. This means holding a special meeting where people have time to map out health and safety risks, agree on priorities, and discuss what actions they're willing to take to solve the problem.

Different types of mapping techniques can gather valuable information and help reveal patterns and hidden problems.

(1) Body maps help workers pinpoint health problems arising from work, and determine whether fellow workers share symptoms.

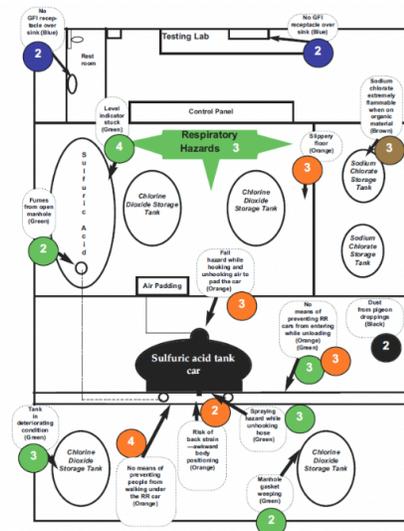
- To prepare, draw two outlines of the human body on large sheets of paper. Label one as "FRONT" and the other as "BACK." Ask participants to use sticky notes or coloured markers, and pinpoint locations of symptoms or health problems on the applicable area of the body.
- After the participants have finished applying stickers or drawing symptoms, ask them to describe one at a time what health problems they represent. The facilitator can note the nature of the health problem beside the relevant sticky note. By doing this, you'll get a clearer understanding of how the work is affecting the health of the workers. You may also reveal hidden patterns (by department, occupation, gender, etc.)



(2) Workplace maps allow you to visualize where hazards and risks are in your work site.

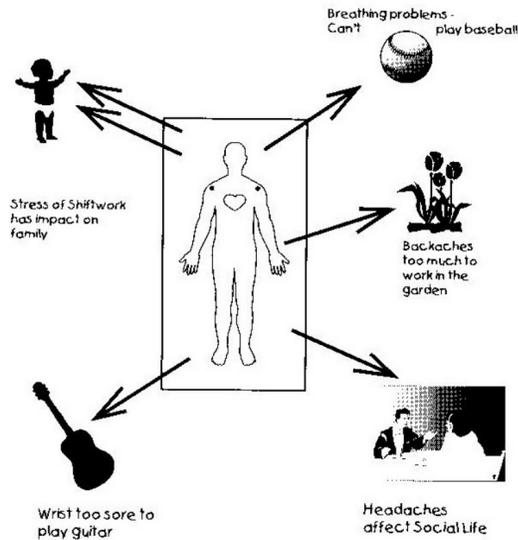
Hazard maps should include:

- A sketch of the physical layout of the work area(s), indicating doorways, aisles, and windows and any machinery, equipment, vehicles, and conveyors.
- Symbols or stick figures representing the participants and any co-workers.
- Symbols or sketches representing hazards and their locations.
- Labels or descriptions for each of the hazards, such as "fumes," "mold," "metal dust," or "medical waste."
- Any safety features now in place.



Do this exercise as a group. The entire point is to share information and generate conversations.

(3) World maps assist workers to reveal the connection between pains and stresses caused by their job and problems in their personal lives outside the workplace.



Draw a small figure of a person in the centre of a large sheet of paper, labelled **YOUR WORLD MAP**. Participants will map out the effects they believe their work is having on their personal lives. They can use either symbols or words connected by lines radiating from the centre of the image to identify and describe issues. They can use either symbols or words connected by lines radiating from the central image to identify and describe issues.

How to Map Hazards

- Download a compilation of valuable materials to help you learn how to **map hazards in your workplace** and get co-workers involved in OHS <https://tinyurl.com/yckzhnn7>

AUPE “Mega Mapping” handout, includes Margaret Keith, “Mapping for change,” Occupational Health Review 101, Jan/Feb 2003, pages 13 – 34.



TAKE WORKPLACE ACTIONS

Workplace actions are how workers flex their collective muscles. You show each other and your employer that you have power. They are hints about being able to interfere with your employer's business. You can use workplace actions to voice OHS complaints, too.

Why organize workplace actions? Taking workplace actions can help you:

1. Check how mobilized your members really are and identify who you still need to communicate with.
2. Build courage and collective power among your fellow workers.
3. Demonstrate solidarity to the employer and apply pressure to resolve an issue.
4. Show the employer your OHS concern is important to everybody.
5. Identify new union supporters and volunteers.
6. Rehearse and prepare for more serious fights.

“Taking actions in the workplace starts with being safe and creative. Your actions should be safe because the minute you give the employer the opportunity to discipline, people become afraid and you lose momentum. You don’t want to give that power to the employer. Your actions have to be creative because it keeps the employer off guard. Change the train, if you’re repeating your actions, they know how to respond.”

– Steve Cowtan, AUPE MSO

Workplace actions can be understood along a spectrum, and categorized into three different types of direct action, ranging from **solidarity actions**, to **pressure actions**, to **confrontational actions**. See the glossary for details. Here are some of the possibilities:

- Show off with **symbols**
Wear a t-shirt, armband, pin or button. Roll up a pant leg or sleeve. Click your pen or cough every time you see your target. Tap. Sing. March into work together.
- Organize a **rally** or hold an **information picket**
Use special public protests or picket lines to publicize your anger. This also makes picketing feel more normal, and helps train and prepare your activists.
- Call **work floor meetings**
Gather all the workers of a particular unit, department or shift for a daily group meeting at the workplace, for rapid updates, to get input, and maintain readiness.
- March on the boss**
Take AUPE's *Direct Action* course to learn how to organize your co-workers to collectively present an issue to management.

“For workers to take ownership of the union, they have to take action together. We don’t file many grievances, even when we can. Instead, we try to solve our problems through action.”

– LaKesha Harrison, President, AFSCME Local 3299

TALK UNION. TALK SAFETY. WHAT DO THE TERMS MEAN?

Accident – an out-of-date term for an unfortunate and unexpected event that has resulted in damage or injury. Because the word can be used to imply the event was unavoidable (and therefore that no action need be taken to prevent future “accidents”), we prefer to use the term “incident.” See “incident” in this glossary.

Administrative controls – a form of hazard control that entails changes to work process, policies, training, or rules designed to reduce exposure to hazards. See “control at the worker.”

Arbitration – a method of settling a dispute between a union and an employer, in which an independent person (or group of people), called an arbitrator or an arbitration board, make a decision that is binding on both the union and employer. It is called “interest arbitration” when it involves settling a collective agreement the employer and union have been unable to negotiate on their own.

Arises-and-occurs test – a test used by the workers’ compensation board to assess whether an injury claim is compensable. To meet this test, an injury must arise from and occur during the course of a worker’s employment.

Bargaining team – see “Negotiating Team”

Barrier to solidarity – An unjust or discriminatory belief or action that prevents different groups of workers from joining together. Barriers to solidarity include racism, homophobia, and sexism, among others.

Behaviour-based safety – an approach to OHS popular with employers, which views the workplace as a venue of measurable behaviour that can be shaped through feedback to prevent injuries. Labour unions criticize this approach to safety because employers can use it to blame workers, assert greater control, and avoid fulfilling their own responsibilities.

Biological hazards – workplace hazards potentially giving rise to injuries caused by organisms – such as bacteria, molds, fungi – or the products of organisms (like tissue, blood, feces) that harm human health. Controls for biological hazards are often the same as for chemical hazards.

Campaign – an organized course of actions done to achieve a particular goal.

Capitalism – an economic system in which most work is performed by employed workers who are paid wages or salaries, and most businesses and companies are privately owned, undertaking most economic activity with the goal of generating private profit. The pressure employers face to maximize profits in this system incentivizes them to reduce spending on protection of workers’ health and safety.

Careless worker myth – the widely held but false belief that workers are accident-prone, careless, or even reckless in the execution of their duties, and that these characteristics are the primary cause of workplace injuries.

Ceiling exposure value (CEV) – The concentration of a substance that should never be exceeded in a workplace.

Chemical hazards – workplace hazards potentially giving rise to injuries caused by a chemical substance that harms human tissue or interferes with normal physiological functioning. Controls for chemical hazards are often the same as for biological hazards.

Closed period – the period of time during the life of a collective agreement when a group of workers are represented exclusively by their bargaining agent, and cannot switch unions or renegotiate new terms in their collective agreement.

Complaint-driven enforcement – a policy wherein workplace inspections are triggered by individual complaints or in response to incidents (i.e., a serious injury or fatality).

Concession – an entitlement, right, or benefit that an employer or government rolls back or removes; something that workers lose.

Confrontational action – one type of direct action that is considered high risk, like job actions. They are a step up from either simply showing solidarity or applying pressure.

Continuous bargaining approach – a way of dealing with the employer in which members enforce their current collective agreement, and also make demands during the closed period. It means using mobilizing tactics like training, grievances, and direct action to pressure the employer during the life of the contract, rather than waiting for the next round of negotiations.

Control at the source – an approach to hazard control that prevents the hazard from entering the workplace via elimination, substitution, or some type of engineering control.

Control along the path – an approach to hazard control that addresses the hazard at some point between its source and when workers encounter the hazard. Some types of engineering controls, like machine guards or local ventilation, control the hazard along the path.

Control at the worker – an approach to hazard control that controls the hazard only after it reaches the worker. These controls may prevent or reduce the consequences of the hazard, rather than control the hazard itself. Personal protective equipment and administrative controls are both examples of control at the worker because they require that the burden of the control be placed upon the worker.

Demand setting meeting – A meeting in which members of a bargaining unit constructively debate and discuss different proposals and language for an ongoing proposal, with a special focus on building consensus about one or more demands that all members support.

Direct action – acts taken directly by workers in their workplace (or in another location), to achieve a goal, rather than relying on others. Direct actions can be classified as violent or nonviolent. Nonviolent tactics include: symbolic actions that demonstrate solidarity, distributing pamphlets, work to rule, work refusals, march on the boss, sit-ins or occupations, sick-ins, pickets, Internet activism (hacktivism), wildcat strikes, and so on.

Due diligence – the standard of conduct by which employers take every reasonable precaution to ensure safety. It is assessed in a three-part test, of 1. foreseeability (reasonable employers know about the hazards of their business), 2. preventability (reasonable employers take steps to prevent injury), and 3. control (reasonable employers are expected to take action to control hazards).

Ergonomic hazards – ergonomics is the study of people's efficiency in their working environment, and ergonomic hazards occur as a result of the interaction of work design and the human body, such as workstation design, tool shape, repetitive work, requirements to sit or stand for long periods, and manual handling of materials. Ergonomic hazards are often considered a subset of physical hazards, but it is useful to consider them separately because they can be overshadowed by more obvious hazards.

Fan out list – a communication system, for gathering or distributing information quickly, built and used by a group of workers to help them mobilize. A fan out list is more than just a simple list of contacts. It organizes workers to establish who is responsible for communicating with others, to reach large numbers of people.

Fatigue – extreme tiredness resulting from overwork, lack of sleep, illness, or mental or physical exertion. Fatigue can be acute (short-term and relieved by sleep) or chronic (ongoing and not relieved by sleep).

Gain – a benefit, increase, entitlement or privilege that an employer or the government grants, especially in response to workers’ demands; something that workers’ win from their employer or the government.

General strike – a strike of workers in all or most industries.

Grassroots organizing – grassroots refers to ordinary people, as opposed to the leadership or elite. In an organization like a labour union, the grassroots is also called the rank and file.

Grassroots organizing is what happens when people come together, talk about problems, and take charge of solving them. We also call it worker-driven or member-driven organizing, because it happens from the bottom-up.

Hazard – a danger, or a potential source of danger.

Hazard recognition, assessment, and control (HIAC) – the process of identifying, prioritizing, and either eliminating or mitigating workplace hazards.

Incident – any undesired event that leads to or could have led to harm to workers. In Alberta, the law defines a “potentially serious incident” (PSI) as any event where a reasonable person would determine that under slightly different circumstances, there would be a high likelihood for a serious injury to a person.

Incident investigation – the process of determining what caused an incident and identifying ways of preventing its recurrence.

Incident report – a written document outlining the findings of an incident investigation, including recommendations for preventing future incidents.

Industrial hygiene (IH) – term used in the United State for occupational hygiene. See “occupational hygiene.”

Informal leader – a worker among the rank and file who is influential and can gain the support of other co-workers.

Internal responsibility system (IRS) – system for workplace health and safety in which the government assumes that workers and employers share responsibility and will take actions in partnership to ensure a safe and disease free workplace. Employers are required to take steps to ensure workplaces are as safe as “reasonably practicable.” The decision by governments to give employers the power to determine how to address workplace hazards strengthens employers’ broader management rights to control and direct work. Worker advocates sometimes criticize the IRS because they find that employees are not given meaningful opportunities to participate and because the government fails to adequately enforce rules or apply penalties for violations. See “due diligence.”

Job action – a direct action a group of workers uses to interfere with their employer’s business or to disrupt production.

Job design – decisions employers make about what tasks will be performed by workers and how that work will be performed.

Joint Work Site Health and Safety Committee (JWHSC) or Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) – committees comprising both workers and management representatives responsible for enhancing workplace health and safety. They can be at the worksite level (JWHSC) or higher up covering an entire employer or region (JHSC). Whether there is such a committee at all, or whether it is at the work site level, has an impact on workers' opportunity to meaningfully participate. Unions negotiated the first such committees in the 1960s and governments began legislating them in response to political pressure. They are now a key feature of the internal responsibility system. See also "OHS Committee."

Latency period – the time between exposure and development of symptoms from that exposure. The long latency period for many occupational diseases can make it difficult to prove to workers' compensation that the disease arose and occurred as a result of work.

Lockout – the closing of a place of employment by an employer or the suspension of work by an employer, for the purpose of compelling the locked-out employees to agree with terms the employer demands.

Management rights clause – article in the collective agreement that gives the employer the exclusive right to organize production and run the workplace.

March on the boss – an action when workers in a given worksite walk together into the boss' office to discuss an issue.

Material safety data sheets (MSDS) – contains information about potential hazards, safe use, storage and handling practices and emergency procedures. Manufacturers and suppliers must provide and employers must make available to workers up-to-date MSDS for any chemicals that are controlled products under WHMIS.

Mediation – a method of encouraging and assisting in the settlement of collective bargaining disputes, in which the employer and union agree to use a third person, called a mediator, who assists them.

Medical monitoring – measuring the presence of a chemical or its metabolic residue in a worker's blood, body fluids or tissues.

Modified work – an altered set of duties and responsibilities that a worker is able to perform despite and injury or disability.

Mobilizing committee – See "workplace committee." In AUPÉ, some components may choose to create a more formal mobilizing committee, which may include component officers, worksite contacts, stewards and bargaining committee members instead of only rank and file members.

Negotiating Team – a small group of workers that members of the bargaining unit elect as their representatives, to meet with the employer and negotiate a new collective agreement. While it is sometimes also called a "bargaining team," AUPÉ's Constitution establishes in sections "Negotiating Teams."

No fault – one of the Meredith principles underlying workers' compensation, stating that who caused the injury is not a factor in the awarding of compensation.

No strike clause – an article in a collective agreement that forbids workers from taking action that disrupts workflow or profits during the life of the contract

Notice to bargain – a notice, presented by either a labour union or employer to the other, to begin collective bargaining

Occupational exposure limit (OEL) – the maximum acceptable concentration of a hazardous substances in workplace air. There are OELs for chemical hazards and physical hazards like noise and radiation.

Occupational hygiene – is the scientific analysis of and protection from hazards at work.

Opposition research – the practice of collecting information on a political opponent, an employer, or other adversary that can be used to discredit or otherwise weaken them

Occupational segregation – the tendency of men and women to work in different occupations, thereby facing different workplace hazards.

OHS committee – one of AUPE’s thirteen permanent committees that meet regularly, formed of groups of eight or nine members appointed by the Executive to fulfill a specific function. AUPE’s standing OHS committee reviews OHS practices and issues, and educates and communicates with members about OHS. AUPE’s OHS committee is not to be confused with Joint Health and Safety Committees (Often in worksites) or Local OHS sub-committees. Some AUPE Locals have their own OHS committee.

Pandemic – a sudden outbreak of an infectious disease that is widespread and affects a large portion of the world population, often with a high mortality rate.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) – equipment designed to limit the consequences of a hazard, worn by workers. Helmets, goggles and latex gloves are forms of PPE. PPE is the least effective control because it does not control the hazard itself and is heavily reliant on human action to be effective. Furthermore, most PPE has historically been designed for the male body, compromising its effectiveness when used by women. See “control at the worker.”

Physical hazards – workplace hazards potentially giving rise to injuries typically (but not always) caused by a transfer of energy. This category of hazards includes noise, vibration, temperature, electricity, atmospheric conditions, radiation, contact with equipment or other objects, working at heights, and slipping, tripping or falling.

Picket – a group of people standing outside a workplace or other venue, protesting something, and trying to persuade others not to enter the workplace during a strike

Political action – an act or activity that an individual or group takes to exert pressure on elected officials or to otherwise influence government. It includes lobbying elected officials, supporting the election of candidates to government who are sympathetic to the welfare and interests of the supporter, or communicating with the public, media and opposition parties in order to pressure the government.

Post-traumatic stress disorder – ill health typically brought on by a terrifying event, with symptoms including flashbacks, severe anxiety and uncontrollable thoughts about the event.

Precarious employment – paid work characterized by limited social benefits and statutory entitlements, job insecurity, and low wages. It is associated with high risk of ill health due to pressures, disorganization, and regulatory failure in workplace structure and practice.

Pressure action – one type of direct action, the purpose of which is to pressure the employer. They are a step up from solidarity actions and a step before confrontational actions. Pressure actions include things like calling group meetings with management, setting up a display table in your workplace lobby and distributing information.

Proximate cause – the event that is immediately responsible for an injury or near miss event. See “root cause.”

Psycho-social hazards – a category of hazards that include social, environmental and psychological factors that can affect human health and safety. These hazards include violence, harassment, stress, mental fatigue and mental illness.

Rank and file – common and ordinary workers or members of a union, as opposed to the leadership or elite. Sometimes also called grassroots.

Racialized workers – individuals perceived to be a part of a race or ethnicity (e.g. Black, Hispanic, Asian) to which particular characteristics, often negative, are associated.

Radiation – energy emitted from a source, including heat, light, x-rays, microwaves, and other waves and particles.

Reasonably practicable – precautions that are not only possible but are also suitable or rational, given the particular situation.

Regulation – a rule made by a federal, provincial, or territorial cabinet or cabinet minister under the authority of an Act, and having the force of law.

Reproductive hazards – workplace hazards that give rise to injuries to workers’ ability to reproduce or, in the case of pregnancy, to injuries to a fetus.

Return to work (RTW) – programs designed to reintegrate injured workers into the workplace via practices such as modified work.

Right to know – workers’ right to know about the hazards they face in their workplace under the internal responsibility system.

Right to participate – workers’ right to engage in workplace health and safety activities (often through joint health and safety committees) under the internal responsibility system.

Right to refuse – workers’ right to decline to undertake unsafe work under the internal responsibility system. It represents one of the few instances where workers can legally disobey their employer. A refusal requires employers to investigate and remedy unsafe work. The legislation of most governments and interpretation have narrowed the instances when workers can legally refuse.

Risk – likelihood that a hazard will result in injury or ill health.

Root cause – the ultimate or “real” cause of an injury or near miss incident, as opposed to proximate cause. See “proximate cause.”

Safety management systems – programs that construct goals and performance measures related to safety, often with the assistance of an outside consultant.

Safety orientation – training for new workers that addressed workplace hazards, emergency procedures, PPE training, politics and job-specific OHS.

Secondary picketing – picketing somewhere other than the place of employment. Secondary picketing is illegal in Alberta.

Social network – 1. the arrangement or system of relations between different members of a group. 2. a dedicated website or application which lets users communicate by posting information, comments, messages, images or videos.

Shift work – work that occurs outside regular weekday hours. It may include regular evening or night work, rotating schedules, split shifts, irregular shifts, or on-call work. It is a growing trend in Canada. Some forms of shift work encourage behaviour contributing to poorer health, disrupts family and social activities, adds stress, and chronic fatigue.

Solidarity action – 1. One type of direct action workers take, characterized by showing solidarity, like by wearing buttons or marching in to work together; 2. a job action taken by workers or members of a labour union in support of another group of other workers, sometimes called a “secondary action” or “sympathy action.”

Solidarity unionism – an approach to forming a labour union that rejects relying on negotiating and enforcing formal contracts, or on mediating relations with the employer through union staff or elected officials. Instead, workers who believe in solidarity unionism focus on gaining a measure of control in the workplace, through grassroots organizing and by taking direct action to pressure an employer to concede to workers’ demands.

Stakeholder – a person, group or organization that has an interest or concern in an organization. Stakeholders can affect or be affected by the organization’s actions. Stakeholders may be clients, patients, service users, customers, creditors, directors, employees, government (and its agencies), owners (shareholders), suppliers, unions, and the community from which an organization draws its resources.

Strategic corporate research – the practice in which workers in unions or social-change organizations analyze corporate ownership, finance, organization, and power, to reveal the employer’s relationships and other information that makes campaigns more effective at changing how the boss deals with workers.

Strike – a refusal to work organized by two or more workers, as a form of protest, or for the purpose of compelling their employer to agree with a demand.

Task analysis – mapping out the flow of work to allow for a systematic examination of how a job is supposed to be conducted.

Thermal stress – stress produced when temperature extremes prevent your body from properly self-regulating to maintain core body temperature at about 37 degrees Celcius.

Time-weighted average exposure value (TWAEV) – the maximum average concentration of a chemical in the air for a normal eight-hour working day or 40-hour working weeking.

Toxic workplace – a workplace characterized by relentless demands, extreme pressure, and brutal ruthlessness representing the extreme of stressful workplace environments.

Unfair labour practice – an activity that violates Alberta’s Labour Relations Code, committed by an employer, employer’s organization, labour union or individual.

Vocational rehablity benefits – programs and other benefits provided by a workers’ compensation board to increase the probability of an injured worker returning to employment.

Wage-loss benefits – benefits paid by a workers’ compensation board to workers whose income is reduced by an injury.

Workplace action – a form of direct action a group of workers use to demonstrate symbolically to each other, and especially to their employer, their collective power and ability to disrupt production.

Wildcat strike – a strike that workers take without authorization of union leadership, and usually in violation of rules governing strikes. They are sometimes spontaneous, and taken without any advance notice. Wildcat strikes are illegal in Alberta, and result in heavy fines or other punishments.

Workplace committee – an informal group of volunteers at a single workplace, who self- manage and mobilize their co-workers to take collective action and resolve issues. It is sometimes called a “mobilizing committee,” “shop committee,” or “shopfloor committee,” and is an essential part of solidarity unionism.

Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) – a national system that requires the labelling of hazardous materials.

Work to rule – the action of workers who follow official rules, hours, and policies exactly, in order to slow down production and efficiency. It is also called “work to contract.”

Worksite inspections – an examination of a worksite by a government inspector like an OHS officer to ensure compliance with occupational health and safety requirements. Inspections may be random or targeted, or triggered by worker complaints. Inspectors also investigate serious workplace injuries and fatalities.

Westray Act (Bill C-45) – the name of the law that amended Canada’s Criminal Code in 2004 to allow for the criminal prosecution of individuals and organizations that direct the work of others when a worker is injured, and the employer failed to meet its due diligence requirements. Criminal prosecution is meant to address cases of profound failings, such as the 1992 explosion at the Westray Mine in Nova Scotia, for which the amendment is named.

CHECK OUT HIGHLY RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- Get help from an **AUPE OHS specialist or your Membership Services Officer (MSO)**. Use AUPE's OHS reporting form at <https://www.aupe.org/member-resources/forms/ohs-reporting-form> or call the AUPE Resource Centre from Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm at 1-800-232-7284.
- Access free practical resources about OHS legislation, hazards, health and wellness, from the **Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety** <https://www.ccohs.ca>.
- Download and read the best open OHS text available **Health and Safety in Canadian Workplaces**, Bob Barnetson and Jason Foster <http://www.aupress.ca/index.php/books/120259>.
- Complete the accompanying **free online course from Athabasca University, called IDRL 308**, <https://ocw.lms.athabascau.ca/course/view.php?id=96>.
- Take all the **OHS courses AUPE offers**. Take other courses like *Direct Action* or *Talking Union* to learn valuable skills you can apply to health and safety. Sign up for a union course at <https://www.aupe.org/training>.
- Take a **University of Alberta OHS course**, or a **University of Calgary OHS course**. They are available online or in person at locations throughout Alberta. See if your employer or Local will assist with the costs. <https://www.ualberta.ca/extension/continuing-education/programs/health-and-safety/occupational-health-and-safety>.
<https://conted.ucalgary.ca/hse/>.
- Read the latest issue of **Hazards Magazine**, edited by Rory O'Neill and published quarterly, Hazards is an independent and union-friendly source for OHS activism <http://www.hazards.org>.
- Ensure you understand what counts as **Potentially Serious Incidents (PSI)** and how to report them. <https://www.alberta.ca/report-potentially-serious-incidents.aspx>.
- Subscribe to the Government of Alberta's **OHS e-News** bulletin. <https://www.alberta.ca/health-safety-eneews.aspx>.
- Read the latest news post in **Organizing Work**, a platform for workers to talk about their workplace campaign struggles and commentary on challenges unions face today: <https://organizing.work/>.
- Learn how to eliminate dangerous chemicals with a union-sponsored guide, **Tools for Informed Substitution: How Do You Find Safer Chemicals?** <https://www.wigmorising.ca/cleaning-products-can-be-green/>.

- ❑ Print copies of AUPE’s “**Mobilizing Fan Out Sheet**” and use them to gather your co- workers’ contact information <https://www.aupe.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/C20018MobilizingFanOutSheet.pdf>. Check with your Local and Chapter Chairpersons to get access to existing communication lists.
- ❑ Read up on shopfloor tacts, fighting discrimination, saving good jobs, and strikes. An entire chapter about “Organizing for Health and Safety” (pages 79 -91). **A Troublemaker’s Handbook 2: How to Fight Back Where You Work and Win. Edited by Jane Slaughter**, Detroit: Labor Notes, 372 p. <https://www.labornotes.org/store/troublemakers-handbook-2>.
- ❑ Understand how the economy really works, and how you can make it work for workers, by reading Jim Stanford’s **Economics For Everyone: A Short Guide to the Economics of Capitalism**. Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 417 p. <https://economicsforeveryone.ca/>.
- ❑ Check out the Graphic History Collective’s 2019 comic that shows how strikes are the backbone of the labour movement and source of working-class power. **Direct Action Gets The Goods: A Graphic History of the Strike in Canada**, Toronto: Between the Lines Books, 64 p. <https://btlbooks.com/book/direct-action-gets-the-goods>.



MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Crisis Counselling Service for AUPE Members

<https://www.aupe.org/member-resources/crisis-counselling-service-aupe-members>

AUPE members do stressful jobs, and our lives have been made even harder because of COVID-19. Sometimes, things happen that put us or our family members into crisis. Free, confidential help is available for AUPE members and their spouses and children.

Call AUPE's Crisis Support Service line at **1-844-744-7026**. This service is available even if the crisis is not work-related.

Psychological health and safety are increasingly a crucial part of occupational health and safety. OHS practitioners sometimes only poorly recognize that psychosocial hazards create stress and impact both the physical and psychological well-being of workers.

'Psychosocial' refers to the relationships between individuals' thoughts and behaviours and their social environment. Hazards in this area include interactions among co-workers or with clients and the public, and job content including the way work is organized.

Together, we're working to raise awareness about psychological well-being, and to change people's attitudes toward those who live with mental illness, to help ensure all people are treated fairly with opportunities to contribute to society like anyone else. Here's a short list of some of the best resources available:

Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace, Canadian Standards Association

<https://tinyurl.com/4zkr8fht>

This 71-page standard is numbered CSA-Z1003-13, and establishes requirements for a systematic approach to make workplaces psychologically healthy and safe.

Healthy Minds at Work, Manitoba Government Employees Unions (MGEU)

<https://www.healthymindsatwork.ca>

Our union friends at MGEU created a campaign to advocate for workplace mental health, to create more psychologically healthy work environments.

The Working Mind, Mental Health Commission of Canada

<https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/training/twm/>

This program aims to reduce stigma and raise mental health awareness.

Virtual Pocket Card, Mental Health Commission of Canada

<https://tinyurl.com/54hft9p4>

This short booklet shows a model for mental health on a continuum, and four strategies.

Mental Health for All, Canadian Mental Health Association

<https://www.cmha.ca>

Find info and help on suicide prevention, workplace mental health and mental illnesses.

Mental Health Services, Wayfound Mental Health Group

<https://wayfound.ca>

Specializing in the mental health of public service workers, clinicians offer preventative and trauma-focused treatments, at clinics in Calgary, Red Deer and Edmonton.

OHS VIDEOS

To learn more about workers' health and safety struggles, watch one of these recommended films. Show one of these movies at a Chapter meeting or as part of a lunch'n'learn activity. Use the safe URL provided to stream from the web.

A Day's Work, Dave DeSario and David M Garcia, 2015, 56 min., <http://www.tempfilm.com/main/>
Documentary examines the health and safety risks of temp workers through the story of Day Davis, killed on his first day at work.

Alice Hamilton: Science, Service, and Compassion, Ray Sinclair / NIOSH, 1988, 12 min.
<https://bit.ly/3bqRH9Q> Alice Hamilton was a pioneer of occupational medicine and industrial toxicology, and advocated for the health and safety of workers.

Bea Zucco, Landrock / BC Knowledge Network, 2013, 3 min. <http://bit.ly/35fGRR9> One woman fought eight years to overturn an injustice. She won. The government changed the law in favour of the families of victims of occupational disease.

Can't Take No More, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) / Durrin Films, 1980, 29 min.
<https://archive.org/details/gov.osha.censored.3>
Ronald Reagan's administration censored this film. The video survived because a few union officials refused to return their 16mm tapes to the government.

Celebrating 50 Years of Occupational Health and Safety in Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, 2022, 14 min. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9V7zA1wbrMw>. Saskatchewan was the first province to pass modern OHS legislation, with the help of Bob Sass, who imparts wisdom in this video.

Dennis Malayko, Don Bouzek / Alberta Labour History Institute, 2016, 4 min. <http://albertalabourhistory.org/aupe/dennis-malayko/> Full transcript and short video clip of Dennis Malayko's oral history by ALHI.

Dennis Malayko – Forty Years of OHS Advocacy, Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, 2017, 17 min. <https://bit.ly/2VI6FbU> Commemorative film celebrates the OHS achievements of Dennis Malayko in his 40 years of advocacy with AUPE.

Lessons From Elliot Lake, Barna – Alper Productions / Workers' Health and Safety Centre, 1994, 30 min.
<http://bit.ly/2PhdbNX> Workers, politicians and Steelworkers reflect on events from the 1974 Elliot Lake uranium miners' wildcat strike. They discuss how worker knowledge and power were central to their struggle.

Markdcatlin. (n.d.) [YouTube Channel]. <https://www.youtube.com/user/markdcatlin> A collection of historic films and clips about workplace health and safety. Mark is a retired occupational hygienist and the former safety director at Service Employees International Union (SEIU). He was a guest at AUPE's 2019 labour school.

Our Health Is Not For Sale, Boyce Richardson / National Film Board, 1987, 26 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7_inJefc. Wildcat strikes erupt around Canada in the early 1970s because employers ignore workers' concerns about toxins. Bob Sass educates workers to pressure employers and creates joint OHS committees.

Triangle: Remembering the Fire, Daphne Pinkerson / HBO Documentary Films / Blowback Production, 2011, 42 min. (director) <https://bit.ly/2XQeAzJ> 146 garment workers died on March 25, 1911 when the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York caught fire. The tragedy led to a surge in unionism and new labour laws.

Westray, Paul Cowan / National Film Board of Canada, 2001, 79 min <https://www.nfb.ca/film/westray/> Moving account of the Westray coal mine disaster that killed 26 men in Nova Scotia on May 9, 1992.

SAFETY RIGHTS VIDEOS, IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES...



During the Covid-19 pandemic, our friends at the Alberta Workers' Health Centre wanted to translate some of their brochures into languages other than English. But when they talked with community leaders, it turned out the real question was "who is handing you the factsheet?" It's important the message comes from somebody in the same community, who's trusted. So, they made some videos instead...

Please **share these videos** now with co-workers, friends, and community members...

English, with subtitles :

<https://youtu.be/3n6blpUltr>

Arabic | العربية:

<https://youtu.be/53SELspeKwk>

Chinese | 中文 :

<https://youtu.be/U86kus644vE>

French | français:

<https://youtu.be/zKcW5VvtJM>

Punjabi | ਪੰਜਾਬੀ:

<https://youtu.be/94UMxTCTjDO>

Russian | русский:

<https://youtu.be/PJnHcOaHbMM>

Spanish | Español:

<https://youtu.be/DowmKsMrnXQ>

Tagalog | Filipino:

<https://youtu.be/1hSyZCeng0k>

Swahili | kiswahili:

<https://youtu.be/aBViske9qq8>



SAMPLE INDEX CARDS FOR YOUR SAFETY TALKS

You can cut out the following pages to make a set of speaker's cards. Use these index cards to assist you when giving OHS orientations to AUPE members.

Use the cards just as they are, or make changes until they meet your needs. You may have specific goals or a unique situation. Go ahead and tailor your one-to-ones.

Set a goal for how many people you're going to try to talk with. Here are some tips:

- Know your material.** Learn the basics about OHS and AUPE. Don't worry if you don't have an answer. Invite the person asking the question to find out together with you, or find out the answer and then get back to them.
- Make it personal.** Use humour, personal anecdotes, and conversational language.
- Practice makes permanent.** Rehearse your talk aloud several times. If you need notes, check your cards as a reminder only. Do not read your notes.
- Time yourself.** Be able to explain the basics of your OHS orientation in five to seven minutes. Allow extra time for questions and discussion.
- Pace yourself.** Many people rush when they're nervous. Practice talking at a calm, steady pace. Use pauses for greater impact and smile to maintain attention.
- Choose an appropriate location.** Plan how you will get your listener to accompany you to a space free of distractions and away from management.
- Arrive early.** Relax. Visualize your success. Give yourself time to gain familiarity with the location. Breathe and stretch before starting. Imagine yourself talking confidently and that your listener is engaged.
- Speak clearly.** Make eye contact. Use the right volume so you're heard.
- Use visuals or other resources.** Show a picture, infographic, handout or poster. Give the listener something to take with her.
- Trust your listener.** Most people are grateful that someone else is concerned about their welfare. They want to know more about why you would want to talk with them about AUPE and about health and safety.
- Involve the worker.** Invite the worker to join you in taking an action.



1. Introduce Yourself. Find out about the member.

My name is _____.

- *I'm the OHS Liaison for Local _____ at AUPPE. Do you know much about AUPPE?*

- *How long have you worked here?*

- *Do you have any concerns about your health and safety at work?*

I'd like to invite you to do a health and safety orientation with me. It will take about ten to 20 minutes, depending on the questions you might have.

2. Overview of rights and the law.

You have a right to feel safe at work and return home each day healthy.

Every year, more than a hundred workers in Alberta lose their life on the job, and more than a hundred thousand are injured or hurt. We want to stop that.

Alberta has a law that is meant to protect your health and safety at work. It's called the **Occupational Health and Safety Act**.

You have three safety rights that the government has acknowledged in this law. We call them the "Three Rs." There are actually four. The fourth is like a bonus.

3. Right to know.

The first one of the "Three Rs" is the **Right To Know** about hazards we face.

Hazards are the dangers of working in this workplace.

Some hazards are obvious. But there are also hidden hazards. Chemical and biological hazards are often not apparent.

The law says employers must train workers adequately to protect health and safety. Your supervisor must advise you all the hazards in your work area.

- *Has your employer ever provided you a health and safety orientation, or OHS training?*

[OHS Act, sections 2(d), 3(2) and 4(a); OHS Code, Part 2, Sections 7 and 8]

4. WHIMIS.

There are also rules to help us know about dangers.

The **Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System** (WHIMIS) is a federal program that requires our employer to label dangerous materials.

The employer must provide us with safety data sheets (SDS) that outline the hazards of the substance, and instructions for their safe handling.

- *Do you know where to find the safety data sheets at your workplace?*
- *Have you ever read one?*

[OHS Code, Part 29] <https://whimis.org/>

<https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/download/sample/530>

5. Right to participate.

The second of our “Three Rs” is the **Right to Participate**. You have a right to participate in OHS activities and in decisions that could affect your health and safety.

This right gives you a process for addressing safety issues and concerns you may have. You are allowed to speak up. Raising safety concerns helps keep everyone here safe.

[OHS Act, section 2(d)(ii)]



6. Overview of rights and the law.

Our **collective agreement** is the written contract between the employer and AUPE that outlines the terms and conditions of our employment. The collective agreement includes health and safety rules.

The union helps keep us safe, because it negotiates for stronger safety standards than the minimum requirements. It makes union members aware of their rights and the obligations of the employer.

We can file grievances if the employer breaks a rule. We can request investigations by the joint health and safety committee (JHSC).

The employer meets its obligation to let us participate in health and safety by agreeing with AUPE to create a joint health and safety committee (JHSC).

[OHS Act, Part 2]

7. Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC)

The Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) is a group of employees and managers who sit together at least every three months to deal with OHS concerns.

The worker representatives on the committee are chosen according to the rules of the union. We elect the committee members at our union meetings so they are independent of management and actually represent us. The JHSC:

- deals with the concerns you raise to them
- inspects the workplace
- promotes health and safety
- investigates injuries and serious incidents that could have led to injury

They post the minutes of their meetings for everyone to review and stay informed.

- *Do you know where to find the latest minutes from your JHSC?*

You can raise a health and safety concern at any time with a member of the JHSC.

- *Do you know who the worker representatives are your JHSC?*

[OHS Act, Part 2, OHS Code, Part 13]

8. Right to refuse.

So far, I mentioned the right to know and the right to participate. The third right in your “Three Rs” is the **Right to Refuse dangerous work**. If you’re being asked to do work you think could present a danger to you or to any other person, these are the steps you take:

1. Don’t do the work.
2. Tell your supervisor or other representative of the employer as soon as possible what you’re refusing to do, and why.
3. The employer must investigate and take action to eliminate the danger. The employer is allowed to assign another qualified worker to do the work, but the employer must tell that worker about your refusal. If the danger was not immediately removed, the employer must provide you with a report once their investigation is complete that explains the actions they took to address the danger
4. If the employer does not stop the work, investigate, or take action to eliminate the danger, you should inform AUPE and the government. I’ll explain how to do that in a minute.

You are to be paid regardless of refusing. You are to do other safe work the employer assigns you.
Do you understand how to refuse dangerous work?

[OHS Act Part 3, section 17] <https://www.alberta.ca/refuse-dangerous-work.aspx>
<https://www.aupe.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/Dangerous%20Work%20Poster.pdf>

9. No retaliation – no “disciplinary action”

Your employer is not allowed to retaliate or take any “disciplinary action” against you because you refused dangerous work or were following your duties under the law.

We call this the **right to be free from reprisal** and it’s a bonus “R” added on to your other “three Rs” (rights to know, participate and refuse).

Disciplinary action means any action or threat that negatively affects your terms or conditions of employment. It includes things like withholding promotion, termination, layoff, suspension, demotion, transfer, eliminating your job, changing your job location, reducing pay, changing your work hours, reprimanding you, and coercion.

If you believe the employer is retaliating because you refused dangerous work or were following OHS rules, you can file a complaint.

The government can force your employer to make the situation right again.

[OHS Act Part 3, sections 18 and 19]

10. Lifting and handling

Let’s talk for a minute about common hazards AUPPE members face, and what employers must do to prevent injuries because of these hazards. Slips, trips and falls are a danger for everyone. Another common hazard is **lifting and handling** loads and patients.

It is important you protect your back and avoid musculoskeletal injuries. This is an especially common injury in healthcare.

Your employer must provide you with appropriate equipment and with training for lifting and handling heavy and awkward loads.

Health care employers must have a special program for helping workers lift or transfer patients, clients or residents.

[OHS Code Part 14]

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/erg013-how-much-can-i-lift>
<https://www.aupe.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/document-committee-ohs-lifting-and-handling.pdf>

11 Violence and harassment

Violence and harassment are not part of your job.

Violence means threatened, attempted or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical or psychological injury or harm. That includes domestic violence and sexual violence.

Harassment means any incident or repeated incidents of unwelcome conduct, comment, bullying or action that causes offence or humiliation to a worker, or adversely affects that worker. It does not mean reasonable conduct of an employer or supervisor to manage the worker.

The law requires the employer is required to ensure none of the workers experience harassment or violence in the workplace.

The law also requires that you do not cause or participate in violence or harassment.

[OHS Act section 3(1)(c) and OHS Code Part 27]

<https://www.aupe.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/Violence%20Poster.pdf>

12. Working short.

AUPPE members in all sectors have been reporting an increasing number of complaints about short staffing and unmanageable workloads.

Working short is when employers choose to place additional workloads on workers instead of calling in available replacement staff. Working faster and harder is stressful and harmful to workers’ health.

The union has started a sub-committee and campaign to help members deal with concerns. The union’s research department has created a survey and is doing focus groups.

<https://www.aupe.org/news-and-publications/campaigns/working-short>

In 2019, the BC Nurses’ Union won a ‘working short premium’ in their contract. The idea is that paying staff who are forced to work short more money is an incentive for employers to go ahead and ensure safe staffing levels are provided at all times.

Working short is not safe, and you should report it to AUPPE. The more evidence we gather, the more we can bring the problem to employers to deal with.



13. Psychological health and safety.

Psychosocial hazards of your job can create stress and impact both your physical and psychological well-being.

'Psychosocial' refers to the relationships between individuals' thoughts and behaviours and our social environment. Hazards in this area include interactions among co-workers or with clients and the public, and job content including the way work is organized.

We need to raise awareness about psychological well-being, and change people's attitudes toward those who live with mental illness, to help ensure all people are treated fairly with opportunities to contribute to society like anyone else.

AUPE offers free, confidential help to members and their spouses and children, for dealing with crisis. Call AUPE's Crisis Support Service line at **1-844-744-7026**. This service is available even if the crisis is not work-related.

There are many good resources out there about mental health at work. One of the best is from AUPE's sister union in Manitoba:

Healthy Minds at Work, Manitoba Government Employees Unions (MGEU)

<https://www.healthymindsatwork.ca>

14. Workers' Compensation Board (WCB).

Despite our best efforts to prevent injuries and occupational disease, sometimes they happen.

You should report any and all injuries to the **Workers' Compensation Board**.

The Workers' Compensation system provides injured workers with income to replace lost wages, rehabilitation and medical benefits. It is paid for by all employers. You have up to two years from the date of an injury to file a claim.

It doesn't matter if you did not lose time and worked through the injury. You should file a claim even if you think the matter was insignificant. You need all your claims recorded to help show that your injury arose from and occurred in the course of your employment. You never know when in the future, if you develop an occupational disease or chronic pain, you will need that claim as proof.

You can report online, go to www.wcb.ab.ca > Claims > Report an injury > Report online

<https://www.wcb.ab.ca/resources/for-workers/>

https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/workers/worker_handbook.pdf

<https://www.aupe.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/document-committee-ohs-wcb.pdf>

15. Filing a complaint.

File a complaint

At any time, you can **file an OHS complaint** to the government, and get an OHS officer involved. OHS officers are also AUPE members. Their job is to investigate and inspect workplaces to make sure the employer is meeting its obligations.

They have the power to issue orders and ticket employers for violating the law.

To file a complaint, you call the OHS Contact Centre:

708-415-8690 (in Edmonton)

1-866-415-8690 (in Alberta)

1-800-232-7215 (TTY – Hearing Impaired)

<https://www.alberta.ca/file-complaint-online.aspx>

16. AUPE.

AUPE helps members like us to stand up for our safety and rights.

AUPE offers OHS courses. You can take a course in the union education program for free, and get wage replacement during your time away from work.

<https://www.aupe.org/training>

The union has its own standing OHS committee. It's a group of eight members led by one of the union's Vice-Presidents. They focus on promoting OHS.

At any time, you can get help from an AUPE Membership Services Officer (MSO) or from one of the union's OHS specialists. Just call the union at the toll-free number, **1-800-232-7284**.

- *Are you interested in taking an OHS course from AUPE?*
- *Will you sign our petition to the employer about this OHS issue?*
- *Will you come to our next Chapter meeting? Local AGM?*



A large, empty rectangular box with a dashed border, intended for writing a message on the front of a card.

A large, empty rectangular box with a dashed border, intended for writing a message on the back of a card.

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Make your own cards to tailor your message.



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1 800 232 7284
AUPE.ORG/TRAINING