



Worker Rep and Co-Chair Handbook

For Effective Joint Health
and Safety Committees



AUPEEducation



Introduction

This booklet helps AUPE members fulfill their role as a Worker Representative or Co-Chair for a Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC).

If you're considering joining a JHSC or are newly elected to one, the pages that follow give you a good overview of what to expect. We hope you take part in the struggle to reduce Alberta's workplace injury rates.

If you're already a member of a JHSC, this booklet suggests actions to make your JHSC more effective. This handbook accompanies an online course AUPE offers to members of JHSCs.

Members of JHSCs play an important role. You identify workplace hazards and make recommendations about how to remove them. You also encourage co-workers to exercise their safety rights.

Your employer should respect you as an elected or appointed representative of AUPE. You carry out your duties as a member of your employer's JHSC with the backing of your union.

Take advantage of the supports available from AUPE. Your union's officers, staff, standing OHS committee, and education program can all help. And one-to-one conversations with your fellow workers will build a stronger union.

Remember, we are fighting to prevent anyone from being hurt because of their job. It's like the old labour saying goes: "An injury to one is an injury to all."

Representing your fellow workers on a JHSC can mean more than attending meetings. It means taking part in broader fights outside the job. We stand up for democracy. We stand against the corporate agenda of cutbacks, restructuring, and privatization. Those things threaten members' jobs and make our work conditions less safe.

AUPE Education

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Disclaimers:

The content in this handbook is for educational purposes only. It's not legal advice.

This booklet is not intended to meet any standard for training prescribed in legislation, a collective agreement, or employer policy. It's not a substitute for training that employers must provide members of JHSCs. Similarly, it's employers that must ensure workers are adequately trained to perform their work safely and competently.

The OHS practices of your employer likely differ from the suggestions in this booklet. Many JHSC activities are specific to a particular worksite.

In the event of missing or contradictory information, the requirements under Alberta's OHS legislation, a collective agreement, or your employer's OHS program prevail over this handbook.

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Note: If you see a term in **boldface** in this booklet, you will find a definition for it in the glossary.

1. Your Safety Rights and the Internal Responsibility System

Worker safety rights are the foundation of the occupational health and safety (OHS) system in Canada. You have the right to a safe and healthy work environment. This includes protection from **hazards** and from employer retaliation for speaking up about safety. Your rights include:

1. **The right to know** about hazards you might face in the workplace.

This means access to information about workplace hazards, including dangerous materials, equipment, and processes. Workers have a right to training on safety protocols, emergency procedures, and the proper use of equipment. Your employer must inform you about your rights and responsibilities regarding workplace safety.

2. **The right to participate** in workplace health and safety activities. This includes joining a joint health and safety committee (JHSC).

This means the employer should actively involve workers in hazard assessments and developing safety procedures. You have a right to voice your concerns regarding safety issues and to participate in processes that affect your health. It's meant to be a collaborative approach, so workers can suggest improvements and contribute to preventing incidents.

3. **The right to refuse** unsafe work.

If you or other workers believe that performing a task poses a risk to somebody's health and safety, you have a right to refuse to do so, without fearing retaliation. This right comes with the responsibility to report the unsafe condition to the employer promptly. The employer is obligated to investigate the situation and take appropriate measures to address the issue.

These are sometimes called the "Three Rs." But some union safety activists add two more rights to the list. You can consider these your bonus rights:

- ➔ **The right to be free from retaliation or reprisal.** Employers are not allowed to discipline you for refusing unsafe work, speaking up about safety concerns, or for protecting the health and safety of others at work.
- ➔ **The right to a resolution.** You have a right to have issues and concerns about your health and safety at work resolved, in a timely manner. In other words, you have the right to have dangers removed or remediated, and for your workplace to be a safe and healthy one.

To fulfill these rights, governments in Canada established the **internal responsibility system (IRS)**. In this framework, everyone in the workplace shares accountability for health and safety. Workplace parties (like your employer, supervisor, and fellow workers) have unique roles. They must collaborate to promote and follow safe practices.

The idea is for workers and management to develop self-reliance, inside the workplace. This partial self-regulation takes the place of ‘external’ enforcement by government.

The internal responsibility system exists by law. In Alberta, the **Occupational Health and Safety Act** establishes the general duties of worksite parties:

- Employers must provide the necessary resources, establish policies and procedures, and ensure workers are trained to work safely.
- Workers must follow safe work practices, report hazards, and refrain from participating in harassment or violence.

For the internal responsibility system to succeed, it’s crucial to foster a culture of safety. A **culture of safety** is a shared set of values that prioritizes safety throughout your organization.

It involves promoting an environment that embeds safety in daily operations. Communication must be open and effective. It requires strong leadership commitment, active worker participation, and regular training. **Hazard identification** and **control** must be ongoing processes. In short, a culture of safety requires continuous improvement.

In the internal responsibility system, government limits its role to three main areas. First, governments may try to raise awareness about workplace safety through campaigns aimed at workers.

The second role of government is to do some limited enforcement. Alberta’s provincial government employs approximately 140 **OHS officers** (who are AUPE members). Their job is to investigate complaints and check for compliance with OHS rules.

Governments are also the only party that can change the laws meant to protect workers. So, the third role is to review and update safety laws (see the following sections on “Safety legislation and more” as well as “Lobby government for laws that work for workers”).

The law doesn’t always mandate specific health and safety rules for employers to implement. Generally, governments give employers the power to determine how to address workplace hazards. This strengthens employers’ broader **management rights** to control and direct work.

2. Workplace Safety Legislation and More

A variety of important documents regulate your safety at work. It's important to know about Alberta's OHS laws, your collective agreement, and your employer's unique OHS program. They create a web of rules that set limits on your employer's right to manage. Try to keep learning more about each of them. Doing so helps you fulfill your role as a worker representative for a JHSC.

OHS Legislation

Legislation is a set of written laws, also called statutes. Since 1976, Alberta's **Occupational Health and Safety Act** ("*OHS Act*") governs workplace safety for all provincially-regulated workplaces in Alberta. About 90% of employees and a large majority of the over 185,000 employers in Alberta must follow this law. This is the safety law that applies to members of AUPE.

The *OHS Act* is supplemented by *OHS Regulation and the OHS Code*. Together, they establish minimum standards for safe and healthy practices in Alberta's various industries. Pay the most attention to the *Act and the Code*. You should get your own copies.

To access the *OHS Act* and Code, you can use either print copies or digital copies:

- **Ask your employer for a hardcopy** of a blue OHS Handbook from the King's Printer:
<https://www.alberta.ca/laws-online-catalogue>
- **Download PDFs of the law** to your computer or device. You can search them by keyword: <https://www.alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code.aspx/>



The *OHS Act and Code* are divided into "Parts" and "Sections." Each Part has a title that describes major themes. These include general obligations, dangerous work refusals, and safety committees. These broad themes are divided into numbered sections. Those sections set out specific provisions.

For example, Part 14 of the *OHS Code* is about lifting and handling loads. Section 208 establishes a rule that employers must provide appropriate equipment for moving heavy or awkward loads.

You should gradually and continuously familiarize yourself with the legal requirements related to work performed at your worksite. The law establishes many rules about workplace hazards, including:

- general precautions,
- exposure to harmful substances,
- violence in the workplace,
- working alone,
- emergency preparedness,
- first aid,
- tools and equipment,
- and much more.

Reading the law is tough. But you can do it! It's fairly similar to reading your **collective agreement** (more on that below). Many other workers have learned how to use Alberta's OHS legislation to hold their employers accountable. If they could do it, so can you.

And keep in mind, the government can (and does) change the law. Alberta's United Conservative Party (UCP) did just that in 2020. It passed a law called Bill 47, which weakened workers' safety protections in Alberta's *OHS Act*. Likewise, the *OHS Code* undergoes regular reviews.

Changes can be made by whichever political party forms government. Those changes may benefit or harm workers. So, you need to pay attention to which changes affect you. And join in broader fights to improve employment laws.

Collective agreements

Your employer and union periodically negotiate a **collective agreement**. That's a written and legally binding contract about many terms and conditions of employment. It applies to a group of workers (who are also called a "bargaining unit"). It defines rights and obligations of the employer, your union, and the workers.

Through the process of **collective bargaining**, the employer and union agree to rules. They establish your wages, benefits, and general working conditions. They often also outline specific mechanisms for resolving safety concerns in your workplace.

Collective agreements may set out safety measures that exceed the minimum standards found in legislation. This is part of the reason workplaces are usually safer when unionized. We call that the **union safety advantage**.

Importantly, you can use rules about JHSCs written in your collective agreement to make your safety activities more effective. This is especially true since Alberta's government rolled back rules about JHSCs found in the *OHS Act*.

Every time your collective agreement expires and is renegotiated, you and your co-workers have an opportunity. You can bargain for improvements to safety practices, as well as access to better training and equipment. Worker representatives from the JHSC can collaborate with AUPE **Negotiating Teams** to demand and win stronger safety rights.

To access either a hardcopy or a digital copy of your collective agreement, you should:

- ➔ **Ask your employer** for a hardcopy of your collective agreement. Or, contact AUPE's Resource Centre to request a printed copy for pick-up or to be mailed to you.
1-800-232-7284
- ➔ **Download a searchable PDF** by following links to your Local on this webpage:
<https://www.aupe.org/locals>

Many clauses in each collective agreement can be interpreted in different ways. When reading your collective agreement, you should interpret the articles systematically. Try asking yourself these three questions:

1. What rights does this clause establish?
2. Who owns the right? The member, the union, or the employer?
3. What obligations or conditions must be met, and by whom, for the right to take effect?

For support interpreting your collective agreement, you can take an AUPE course called *Contract Interpretation*. You can also ask your Membership Services Officer (MSO) for help.

In summary, collective agreements can serve as a vital tool for promoting workplace safety. They can set standards and facilitate communication between employers and workers. They can also empower you to actively participate in matters that affect safety and well-being on the job.

Your Employer's Health and Safety Program

To effectively fulfill your duties as a worker representative or co-chair, you need to understand your employer's **health and safety program** ("OHS program").

Some general principles apply to any OHS program. Yet, employers are free within legislated limits to implement their own, unique OHS program. So, the emphasis and characteristics of these programs differ among employers.

Your employer's OHS program varies depending on the industry, size and structure of the organization, specific hazards present at the worksite, organizational culture, and resources and budget.

Here are some key things you should get to know about your employer's OHS program:

- ✓ OHS Policies and Procedures – What are your employer's written policies and procedures about OHS and about your JHSC? What does your employer's OHS manual or handbook say?
- ✓ Hazard Identification and Worksite Inspections – What process does your employer establish to identify workplace hazards? How are risk assessments, controls, and monitoring performed? Who performs worksite inspections and how frequently?
- ✓ Training Programs – What training programs does your employer offer all workers regarding health and safety? What training does your employer offer to worker representatives and co-chairs of the JHSC, about their role?
- ✓ Incident Reporting and Investigations – What is the procedure for reporting and investigating workplace **incidents** and **near misses**? How are incidents documented and by whom? Who conducts and who participates in investigations to identify **root causes**?
- ✓ Worker Consultation – What are the employer's mechanisms for workers to consult or participate in an OHS decision-making process? For example, are there team safety meetings?
- ✓ Resources and Support – Where can you access internal and external resources and support related to workplace health and safety? Does your employer contract external OHS agencies or seek guidance from OHS professionals?
- ✓ Continuous Improvement – Does your employer's OHS program encourage opportunities for continuously improving the OHS program? Does this involve frequent inspections or soliciting feedback from workers?

Worksites with multiple employers or multiple unions present may have other unique JHSC practices, as well. So, find out if your employer or AUPE component are party to any kind of a multi-party agreement related to OHS or for a JHSC. Request a copy of that agreement and familiarize yourself with it.

The stronger your understanding of your employer's specific OHS program, the better job you can do. Figure out how to navigate within the OHS program. And whether it helps or hinders you to advocate for the well-being of your fellow workers and contribute to a safer work en

Paulette Harrison



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3. All About Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSCs)

Joint health and safety committees (JHSCs) first came about in Canada because industrial workers and their unions demanded a say in decisions about exposure to harmful substances on the job. Like most worker gains, we won joint committees through struggle. Eventually, governments passed laws to require employers to establish joint committees and involve workers.

Purpose and function

A **joint health and safety committee** (JHSC) is a group of worker and employer representatives who address health and safety concerns. They may cover a single worksite or many (or all) of the worksites operated by the employer.

The workers who participate in a JHSC are called **worker representatives**.

A **health and safety representative** is an individual worker who addresses health and safety concerns. They promote awareness about health and safety in workplaces not covered by a JHSC.

Employers must consult with unions representing the workers before putting a JHSC or a worker representative in place. If there are two or more employers at a worksite, all the employers must collaborate to establish a JHSC.

Both joint committees and health and safety representatives enable workers to participate in workplace health and safety. They act as advisors to the employer. Employers, however, remain responsible for implementing safety solutions. In this way, JHSCs are advisory committees rather than decision-making committees.

JHSCs should support workers' safety rights. Through scheduled **regular meetings** (and sometimes through **special meetings**), your JHSC will discuss safety concerns. More importantly, you should recommend actions and solutions specific to your workplace.

You should promote opportunities to improve the health, safety, and wellness in your workplace. The goal is to eliminate work-related injuries and illnesses. Or at least reduce them! Doing this can also help your employer reduce losses arising from work-related injuries and illnesses.

How to Volunteer for a Joint Health and Safety Committee

AUPE members can join a JHSC:

During an election year for your AUPE Chapter, the Joint Work Site OHS Representative role is available like any other position, at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

- In non-election years, the JHSC role is only available when an incumbent steps down and a vacancy opens.
- If nobody requests a nomination, then the Chapter or Local Executive can forego an election and may directly appoint a worker to fill the position of JHSC member.
- If you're interested in volunteering, let your Chapter Chair know in advance of your Chapter's AGM. Make sure you request a form be filled out with your information and submitted to AUPE's head office, called the "Joint Worksite OH&S Representative: Chapter Election Form."



This election form is available from AUPE Records Department and part of your Executive's AGM Package. It's available here:

https://www.aupe.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/J1-JWOHS-Chapter-Elec-Form_V2.2.pdf

You should fill out this election form and provide it to your Chapter Executive. Your Chapter Chairperson may rank candidates and will provide the form to the AUPE Membership Services Officer (MSO). Your MSO in turn provides the form to AUPE's OHS staff and to AUPE's member records department. You need to fill out this form and submit it regardless of whether the worker representative is appointed or elected.

! **Be aware**, if AUPE is unable to provide the employer with an elected JHSC member, the employer can and will appoint a worker of its choice. This can be a problem and undermines the intent of JHSCs. Sometimes, employer appointees are not union supporters and tend to be friendly to management's interests. **Warning!** The law enables your employer to establish a reasonable time by which AUPE must provide the employer with the names of worker representatives.

Legislative Requirement – Part 13 and Sections 196.1(5) and (6) of the *OHS Code*.




Many employers establish a 90-day timeframe. You should find out your employer’s timeframe. And then work with your AUPE Chapter to elect or appoint our own worker representative before this deadline.

Note, the law requires the term of office for members of a joint health and safety committee to be stated in the employer’s **terms of reference** for the joint committee.

But, as a member of AUPE, your term of office will be established by union processes once you are elected or appointed to the committee. That’s because worker members of a JHSC who represent AUPE members should be selected by AUPE.

So, for example, AUPE allows that you may be re-elected to the worker representative position every two years. You may serve for consecutive periods.

 Legislative Requirement – *OHS Act, Part 2* and Sections 13(1) and 13(4)(b), and *OHS Code Part 13, Sections 196.1(3) and 197(c)*.

Structure and composition

Joint committees must have worker and employer members. At least half of the members must be worker representatives.

A **worker representative** is an individual worker (who is not associated with management) designated as a JHSC member, to help the employer address health and safety concerns. Worker members represent workers. Worker members must work for the employer, and they cannot be supervisors (unless they’re also members of AUPE) or managers.

Employers must decide how many worker members the JHSC needs, and a set a reasonable timeframe for their selection.

A worker **co-chair** is an individual among the worker representatives who carries out additional responsibilities. The worker representatives of the JHSC elect their committee co-chair. The worker representatives should choose their co-chair together. Do this away from the employer, and at a separate time not part of a **regular meeting**.

The worker co-chair is the counterpart of the employer co-chair. The two co-chairs alternate turns as the chairperson of meetings of the JHSC.

The size of JHSCs varies widely. Technically, it’s possible to have a committee with as few as three members: one employer co-chair, one worker co-chair, and one worker representative.

Generally, a JHSC should reflect the size and nature of your worksite. Considerations for the number of representatives on the committee may include the types of hazards, the number of

departments or worksites, or the types of occupations and classifications of workers covered. So, larger worksites and hazardous worksites will require a larger committee.

The total number of employer representatives for a JHSC cannot exceed the total number of worker representatives.

Legislative Requirement – *OHS Act, Part 2, Section 5.*



In workplaces where different unions represent various workers, your employer's JHSC will reflect the different bargaining units. It's important you collaborate with the worker representatives from other unions.

Duties of a Joint Health and Safety Committee

The core duties of JHSCs are set out in legislation.

Core duties and additional duties for joint committees may be further described in:

- ✓ your collective agreement,
- ✓ your employer's **Health and Safety Program**, and
- ✓ the committee's **Terms of Reference**.

Note, under Alberta's *OHS Act*, since 2020, the government severely restricted the minimum duties of a joint health and safety committee, to four things:

- a. receive, consider and dispose of workers' concerns about health and safety;
- b. participate in the employer's hazard assessment;
- c. make recommendations to the employer respecting the health and safety of workers;
- d. review the employer's worksite inspection documentation.

Legislative Requirement – *OHS Act, Part 2, Section 13(6).*



Your JHSC should ideally perform more duties, based on past practice, the employer's OHS program, or requirements under your collective agreement.

Only worker representatives qualified and trained to do additional duties of JHSCs should do them.

Some of those additional duties may include activities (discussed in other sections of this handbook) like:

- ✓ Inspecting the worksite for hazards.
- ✓ Performing audits with various methods to identify and assess hazards.
- ✓ Investigating injury **incidents** and **near misses**.
- ✓ Developing training to educate fellow workers.
- ✓ Evaluating the employer's OHS program.
- ✓ Supporting workers who exercise their right to refuse unsafe work.
- ✓ Triggering involvement of an **OHS Officer** in an unresolved safety complaint.

Terms of Reference

The law requires employers to ensure each JHSC develops a written **terms of reference** (TOR). That's a document that defines the purpose, structure, and processes of a Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC). Get your own copy and read it carefully so you're familiar.

The law requires that each joint committee's terms of reference describe:

- ✓ A process to select co-chairs,
- ✓ A process for ensuring the worker members are representative of the workers employed,
- ✓ The term of office (period of service) for committee members
- ✓ The frequency for regular meetings,
- ✓ How meeting records (called minutes) will be maintained,
- ✓ A process for conducting meetings,
- ✓ A process for forwarding health and safety concerns to the employer,
- ✓ A process to replace a member during the member's term of office,
- ✓ A dispute resolution process for when the committee cannot agree on a recommendation to the employer, and,
- ✓ A process to address circumstances where committee members fail to fulfill their duties.

Legislative requirement – *OHS Code*, Part 13, Section 197.



Keep in mind that these are only the minimum requirements. You should try to improve your terms of reference document.

Some common improvements you should aim to include are:

- ✓ A description of how long to keep minutes for and other document-keeping rules,
- ✓ A requirement that the employer make available a copy of minutes of past meetings to worker representatives upon request.
- ✓ Expand the scope of authority of the JHSC to exceed the legislated minimum requirements for committees. This means enabling the committee members with adequate training to:
 - o Perform worksite hazard inspections and other audits,
 - o Lead **incident** investigations,
 - o Develop safety training programs, and
 - o Evaluate the employers' **Health and Safety Program**.
- ✓ An enhanced process and timelines for the employer to respond to written recommendations of the JHSC. While it's better to include this in your collective agreement, establishing these mechanisms in your TOR is helpful. Include a deadline for a reply from the employer. The best practice is maximum 21 days or 30 days to reply to your written recommendation. Also, establish a mechanism for finding out what action (if any) the employer is taking.
- ✓ A process for staggering when the incoming committee members replace outgoing members. This helps ensure better continuity. In other words, provide for overlap between new and returning committee members. This way, returning members can transfer knowledge to new members.
- ✓ Enhanced mechanisms for accountability, and oversight. The TOR should outline reporting structures and decision-making processes. The TOR should be made accessible to all workers working at worksites represented by the JHSC.
- ✓ Rules about reviewing and improving the TOR periodically and when the employer introduces significant changes to work processes, equipment, technology or the workplace.
- ✓ A process for allowing workers to select an alternate to attend the JHSC in their place, in the circumstances where a worker representative is unable to attend a meeting.
- ✓ Anything else relevant to your workplace, occupation, or hazards present.

The JHSC should regularly review its TOR. Reviewing the TOR once per year is best practice. And, if necessary, update the TOR. Continuously improving the activities and functioning of the JHSC will ensure it remains relevant, responsive, and effective in addressing safety challenges.

You should ensure the TOR align with current best practices, emerging trends, industry standards, and changing legislation.

You can request the involvement and support of AUPE's staff OHS specialists to support the review and improvement of a joint committee's Terms of Reference. Reach out to ohs.staff@aupe.org.

Your Employer's Duties and Obligations

With respect to a Joint Health and Safety Committee, your employer is required by law to fulfill a variety of duties.

Your employer must:

- ✓ Establish a **joint health and safety committee** (JHSC), if it employs 20 or more workers.
- ✓ Establish a **Health and Safety Program**, if it employs 20 or more workers.
- ✓ Designate a worker to be a **Health and Safety Representative**, if it employs between 5 and 19 workers.
- ✓ Determine how many worker members are needed on the JHSC.
- ✓ State a reasonable time by which AUPE must provide the employer with the names of worker representatives the union has elected or appointed.
- ✓ Select workers for the committee, if the union does not provide the names of worker representatives it has elected or appointed.
- ✓ Allow the worker representatives to choose their own worker co-chair.
- ✓ Ensure the committee develops a written Terms of reference (TOR).
- ✓ Maintain copies of minutes of any **special meeting** of the JHSC, for two years, and make those minutes available to any JHSC member. This refers to the meetings requested by an **OHS Officer** or by a member of the committee to deal with urgent concerns at the worksite.
- ✓ Conspicuously post the names and contact information for members of the JHSC and Health and Safety Representatives at every worksite represented by the JHSC

- ✓ Pay you for and consider you at work for the times you are performing JHSC duties or attending training in connection with these duties.
- ✓ Make the JHSC hold its meetings and carry out its functions during normal working hours.
- ✓ Ensure that members of JHSC or Health and Safety Representatives are trained to perform their role, about the obligations of worksite parties, and about the rights of workers.
- ✓ Inform the JHSC or Health and Safety Representative, as soon as possible, if a worker refuses dangerous work.
- ✓ Give the JHSC or Health and Safety Representative a copy of its written report about the refusal to work, its inspection of any alleged undue hazard, and any action it takes.
- ✓ NOT take any disciplinary action or retaliate against a worker because that worker was exercising their safety rights, speaking up about an OHS concern, and acting in compliance with the.
- ✓ Post any **Orders** it receives from Alberta OHS in a conspicuous place for workers to review.

Legislative requirements – *OHS Act, Part 3 Sections 13(1), 16, 17(1) - (5), 17(11) & (12), 18, OHS Code, Part 13 Sections 196.1(5), 196.2, 197, 199.1, 199.3.*



You should expect even more from your employer. Ideally, your employer should also:

- ✓ Consult with the JHSC on policies, procedures and practices related to workplace health and safety.
- ✓ Provide the JHSC with opportunities to inform workers on health and safety matters.
- ✓ Allow JHSC members to examine records, policies, procedures and practices, reports, and manufacturers specifications.
- ✓ Provide the JHSC with relevant information or documents as soon as they're received.

Establishing a new Joint Health and Safety Committee

Ideally, every worksite should have its own joint health and safety committee (JHSC).

But, the law currently only requires your employer to establish one (1) health and safety committee if it employs 20 or more workers.

This means your employer *may* legally have a single health and safety committee, even if it operates multiple worksites at different locations.

AUPE officials and activists hope that all worksites with 20 or more workers will establish a joint health and safety committee, instead. This was the requirement under a previous version of Alberta’s *OHS Act*, from 2017 to 2020. It’s a norm found elsewhere in Canada. And it’s also a practice that many employers in Alberta continue to follow, despite the reduced legal requirement on them.

In reality, most worksites have at least 20 workers. So, they *should* have a Joint Health and Safety Committee. Yet, not all qualified worksites have a JHSC.

This sometimes happens:

- ☹ At new worksites, or when existing workplaces change location.
- ☹ Because some employers fail to fulfill their duties under the law (see the previous section, above).
- ☹ Because of an existing agreement between AUPE and an employer, so that a single JHSC covers multiple worksites.

Note, even employers required to have only a **Health and Safety Representative** (those with 5 – 19 workers) can also have a JHSC. Employers may establish a JHSC instead of only designating a Health and Safety Representative. This is better for workers. It means you get to involve more people, exercise your right to participate, and create a positive culture of safety.

Summary of Rules about Worker Safety Representation	
Worksite population	Requirement
0 – 4 workers	None – N/A.
5 – 19 workers*	Health and Safety Representative.
20 workers and more	Joint Health and Safety Committee.

*Worksites with 5 – 19 workers can also establish a JHSC. You should encourage your employer to do so.

Legislative Requirement – *OHS Act, Part 2, Sections 13(1) – (7) and 14(1) – (13)*



If your worksite doesn't yet have a JHSC set up, AUPE can assist by providing guidance to your employer. The law requires your employer to consult with AUPE in the establishment of a JHSC.

You should contact AUPE's staff OHS specialists at ohs.staff@aupe.org for support.

Contact Information

Contact information for your JHSC members must be posted at the worksite(s) in a noticeable location, or by another means as agreed by the members of the committee. This usually means posting the contact list electronically, like on a staff portal or intranet. Though posting electronically is acceptable, it's best practice to also post the JHSC contact list to your AUPE union bulletin board.

Legislative requirement – *OHS Code, Part 13, Section 199.1(a) and (b)*.



Looking for another handy reference guide about JHSC activities?
"Health and Safety Committees Reference Guide," CCOHS, 2023.



188 pages + Appendices.
Coil-bound hard copies are also available for \$20 from:
<https://www.ccohs.ca/products/publications/hscomm.html>.
This excellent resource describes the norm for joint committees in Canada and is a standard in unionized workplaces.

Mario Tellez



Mario Tellez works as a painter for the Edmonton Catholic Separate School District. He was first elected to his employer’s joint health and safety committee in 2024. Before joining AUPE, Mario was part of the Alberta Workers’ Health Centre. He trained hundreds of workers to become active worker representatives for more effective worksite committees. He always aimed to provide workers with the “rules” and the “tools” to foster safer workplaces, and not just check off a training requirement. Mario believes that training should be customized to the context and the needs of diverse course participants.

4. Roles and Responsibilities of Worker Representatives and Co-Chairs

What's your role, and how can you fulfill it? How can I be most effective?

Firstly, as a **worker representative**, you represent your fellow workers. You're a spokesperson, for your co-workers and for AUPE. You need to speak up. You should have a keen interest in the wellbeing of people and enthusiasm for the labour movement. Your job is to help others stay safe and healthy on the job.

Nobody was born being a knowledgeable and skilled worker representative. Keep in mind that learning is lifelong and participating in a JHSC is an opportunity for you to improve and grow.

Role of Worker Representatives

As a worker representative on a JHSC or as a **Health and Safety Representative**, your role is to:

- 1. Advocate for workers' safety.**

You must publicly support and recommend measures that enhance the safety, health and well-being of your co-workers. You serve as a voice for workers' interests. You fight to ensure your employer acknowledges and addresses workers' safety concerns.

- 2. Identify and report hazards.**

You must be a keen observer to seek out potential **hazards** and foreseeable risks. You must continuously encourage your colleagues to report known hazards, unsafe conditions, and **near misses**. You bring forward unresolved health and safety issues.

- 3. Actively participate in committee meetings.**

You should thoroughly prepare for all meetings of the JHSC. You should meet separately as a caucus with only the worker representatives before JHSC meetings. Propose items for the agenda, if you see any that need to be addressed. Attend the meetings prepared to discuss health and safety matters. Provide your insights and feedback. Work collaboratively to make recommendations.

- 4. Communicate with your co-workers.**

You serve as a conduit of information between your fellow workers and the JHSC. Tell your co-workers about the activities, written recommendations, and safety initiatives of the JHSC. You should ask co-workers about their safety concerns and bring their insights to the JHSC meetings. Remember, different workers can be exposed to different hazards. So, talk to a diversity of co-workers. It's a great opportunity to ensure the JHSC is not missing health and safety concerns. For example, not all workers are exposed to racist violence, but it can be a serious risk for some.

5. Communicate with AUPE and participate in union safety campaigns.

Share relevant information with other AUPE representatives and stay informed of union initiatives. Communicate with your **Local's OHS Liaison**, AUPE's standing OHS Committee, your Chapter Executive, your Membership Services Officer (MSO), AUPE staff OHS Specialists, and other AUPE officers or staff

6. Collaborate with management.

You must cooperate with the employer representatives of your JHSC and the decision-maker(s) to whom the JHSC reports. You should work towards consensus. Strive to find mutually beneficial solutions, while still prioritizing the wellbeing of workers.

7. Participate in workplace hazard inspections and incident investigations.

Ideally, worker representatives should join in formal worksite walkthroughs, worker interviews, and other methods that identify hazards. You ensure workers' perspectives are considered during these processes. You advocate for the removal of hazards.

8. Training and development.

Participate in opportunities to enhance your skills and knowledge related to workplace safety. This may include taking AUPE courses, attending employer training, learning from experts, or undertaking other activities. Specialized training can help prepare you to fulfill your role and take on additional duties of JHSCs.

Remember, the scope of your role be determined by your employer's **health and safety program** and your committee's Terms of Reference. Ideally, you and your fellow worker representatives should strive to undertake more activities than the legislated minimum duties of JHSCs.

Role of Worker Co-Chair

The employer or employer representatives select an employer co-chair for the JHSC. The worker representatives select a worker **co-chair**. You should do this with no influence from the employer. For example, do it at a separate meeting of only the worker representatives. The terms of reference is supposed to describe a process for selecting the co-chairs.

Co-chairs have additional responsibilities that help ensure the JHSC runs effectively. Here's an overview of the co-chair role for JHSCs:

1. Leadership and facilitation.

Help conduct meetings and other committee activities efficiently. Refocus discussion on solving health and safety problems. Invite subject matter experts or other guests as required.

- 2. Schedule *regular meetings* and activities for your JHSC in advance, so members have time to plan and can attend.** Call a **special meeting** at the request of an OHS officer, or when you can't wait for your next regularly scheduled meeting. That happens when there's an urgent or very serious hazard to address.
- 3. Collaborate and build consensus.**
Work closely with both worker and employer representatives. Foster open communication, active participation, and respectful dialogue among committee members.
- 4. Develop the agenda and distribute it in advance.**
Take turns with the employer co-chair to develop the meeting agenda. Gather input from workers to identify priorities. Ensure that workers' interests are addressed by topics planned for the meeting. Circulate the agenda at least one week before meeting.
- 5. Guide the meetings and other activities.**
During JHSC meetings and other committee activities, you facilitate discussion. Ask all members to contribute. Help resolve disagreements that arise. Ensure the committee reaches recommendations on agenda items. Address deferred items promptly.
- 6. Ensure meeting minutes are recorded and distributed.**
Record minutes or identify a recorder. Get the minutes approved, as per the process described in your terms of reference. Distribute the minutes as soon after the meeting as possible. A good rule of thumb to remember: "If it's not written down, the meeting didn't happen."
- 7. Lead the caucus of worker representatives.**
Plan separate meetings of worker representatives in advance of meetings of the whole JWHC. Discuss, plan and decide on actions, with support of AUPE if needed.
- 8. Liaise with and monitor management.**
You communicate committee recommendations, concerns and findings to a decision-maker for your employer. You also monitor for the implementation of recommendations.
- 9. Training and development.**
You may coordinate or promote development opportunities for JHSC members. Seek opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge related to workplace safety. This may include organizing workshops, guest speakers, or other activities. Help prepare fellow committee members to fulfill their roles.

How to Be Most Effective in Your Role

Actions of worker representatives and worker co-chairs influences the effectiveness of the joint health and safety committee.

Worker representatives who are passive are unlikely to have any impact on workplace safety.

Instead, worker representatives can hold their employer accountable. Employers are more likely to fulfill their own safety duties when you use more of an activist orientation in dealing with safety.

The most effective worker representatives are the ones who:

- ✓ Collect their own information about OHS and unresolved issues,
- ✓ Assert their knowledge about hazardous conditions at work,
- ✓ Caucus with other worker members of the JHSC outside of regular meetings, to research and plan,
- ✓ Propose alternative solutions, and,
- ✓ Mobilize their co-workers to support demands for improvements.

This means you must research solutions and write strong recommendations. Learn more about doing these in separate sections below.

Remember, your employer retains decision-making authority about workplace safety. It's not obligated to act upon a specific recommendation your JHSC makes. Employers can and do make wrong decisions. So, effective worker representatives don't accept "no" for an answer. They keep trying and remain persistent.

It helps to keep in mind that OHS is not just technical. It's also political. Sometimes, employers deny or just ignore the recommendations of a JHSC. That's often because workers and employers have differing interests in the workplace. They view workplace injuries differently.

For employers, risk and removing hazards is mostly an economic issue. Employers are rarely injured themselves. The most significant impact to the employer of workplace injury is the interruption of work.

Many employers view risk of workplace injury as minimal, unavoidable, and acceptable. They adopt a cost-benefit approach to safety. Employers oftentimes only improve safety when doing so costs less to prevent injury than injury itself costs. Employers and managers face structural pressures to reduce costs and use resources efficiently.

Workers are the ones injured, killed, or made sick because of hazards in the workplace. We bear direct costs in a way the employer almost never does. Risks that workers face on the job reflect the decisions employers make. Employers decide about what, when, where, and how goods and services are produced and delivered. Allowing employers to retain all this authority is a political choice of government.

Reducing injury, disease, and death – not maximizing cost-effectiveness – is the main goal of OHS. To be effective in your role, you must acknowledge that sometimes the employer’s priorities differ from the interests of the workers. And you must prioritize safety regardless.

“We have seen over and over throughout the years that there is a very unequal relationship between employers and employees and that gains in health and safety never seem to come without struggle on the part of those at risk.”

- Margaret Keith and James Brophy (2021). *Code White: Sounding the Alarm on Violence Against Health Care Workers*, Between the Lines Books.

5. Participate actively in JHSC meetings

Legislation entitles **worker representatives** to take time away from regular duties to perform their health and safety duties. The law also says you do this without loss of earnings. It entitles you to take training related to your health and safety role. This is the same for **health and safety representatives**.

In fact, a better way of thinking about this matter is that the joint committee's business and *OHS* activities are part of your regular duties. You're deemed to be at work on the employer's business when you're performing health and safety duties or taking committee training.

The activities of a JHSC must be scheduled during an employer's regular working hours. You are to be paid for participating in the committee's activities.



Legislative requirements – *OHS Act*, Part 2, Sections 13(7) and 14(5) and *OHS Code*, Part 13, Section 199.3.

It's important you take an active role in all activities of the JHSC. Members may not be able to attend all meetings, but every effort should be made to attend. The success of the JHSC is in large part determined by both attendance and active participation of the members.

If required by your employer, make sure to request time for your committee duties well in advance. This way, your time can be covered and not be denied.

If your employer is making attendance difficult, please reach out to your Membership Services Officer (MSO) or an OHS specialist from AUPE for support.

Balancing your JHSC duties and your regular job responsibilities is a challenge. If you believe additional time is required to fulfill your JHSC duties, consult with your committee co-chairs and manager.

You can also ask AUPE staff OHS specialists for support, contact ohs.staff@aupe.org.

Types of meetings

You will usually attend **regular meetings**. Those are the meetings of your JHSC that are scheduled on a regular basis and anticipated by the committee members.

Sometimes, you may also be required to attend a **special meeting**. That's a meeting of a JHSC that's held in addition to your regular meetings. They're for dealing with an urgent or serious concern at the work site, or in response to a written complaint. An OHS Officer or your committee co-chair can request a special meeting be convened.

Oftentimes, members of JHSCs also participate in or lead worksite inspections. To learn about preparing for inspections, read the section in this booklet "Inspect and audit your workplace."

Meeting frequency and length

Meeting regularly gives the JHSC the opportunity to address concerns continuously, and in a timely fashion.

The law does not impose a minimum frequency or length of meetings for joint committees. It only says that the **terms of reference** must specify the frequency of **regular meetings**.

Legislative requirement, *OHS Code*, Part 13, Section 197(d).



The most effective committees are those that meet frequently. They allow adequate time for meetings and inspections.

Successful committees schedule:

- ✓ Quarterly meetings, of two to three hours, or;
- ✓ Monthly meetings, of 1.5 hours.

Regular meetings should NOT be combined with other meetings, such those of your department, team, or management. Meetings of the JHSC should be their own, separate meetings. This helps ensure workplace safety gets the attention it deserves, and that appropriate members are in attendance so you can reach quorum.

You should determine in advance the regular meeting dates, in a yearly schedule.

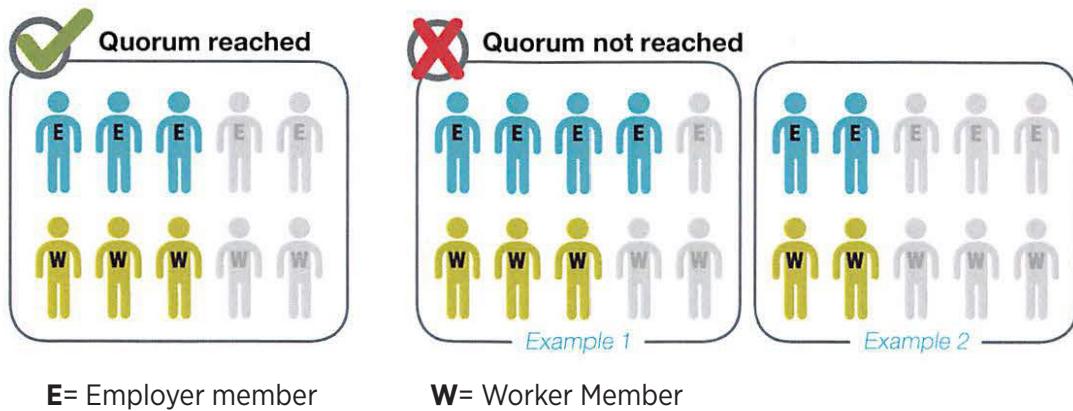
Quorum

Quorum is the minimum number of committee members who must be present at a meeting to carry out business that is considered valid.

At least half of the members must be present for there to be a quorum. Both worker and employer members must be present with at least half of those present being worker members.

Legislative requirement – *OHS Code*, Part 13, Section 119.

Consider these examples:



In example 1, quorum is not reached because the Employer representatives outnumber the worker representatives. In example 2, quorum is not reached because less than half of the committee members are present.

Note, meetings can continue without a quorum for the purposes of sharing information. But a quorum must be present for the committee to conduct business. For a committee to make a recommendation, there must be quorum.

Generally, the JHSC should postpone discussions impacting the bargaining unit or occupational group of a worker representative who was unable to attend. First, make sure that member’s had the opportunity to weigh in. This is especially true for large committees that include worker representatives from different unions.

Preparing for meetings

To prepare for meetings and other JHSC activities, you should:

- ✓ Take training about fulfilling your role (see the section “Train and Educate Your Fellow Workers” for more information).
- ✓ Help develop the agenda or review the agenda.
- ✓ Review **minutes** from previous meetings.
- ✓ Review relevant policies, incident reports, or other materials provided.

Here’s one of the most helpful things you can do to prepare:

- ✓ Meet as a caucus with the worker representatives only, prior to meetings with employer representatives and the whole JHSC.

This helps the workers to discuss the issues, support each other, and attend the JHSC as a united front. Your worker-only meetings can be as little as a half hour ahead of **regular meetings**, or on a different day.

Agenda

A template for a JHSC meeting agenda is in the Resources section of this booklet.

An agenda is the meeting plan and includes topics to be discussed at your JHSC meetings. It acts as a guide to help ensure meetings stay on track and you finish all business. Topics that come up in meetings not related to health, safety and wellness should be redirected.

The agenda is prepared by the committee co-chairs. They can take turns preparing it or prepare it together. This may depend on what’s required in your terms of reference. The agenda should be circulated at least one week prior to the meeting to allow members time to prepare.

Agenda items can be brought forward by committee members or by any workers at the workplace. Note, some employers dislike this and will discourage you from doing it. Hold firm! Insist on bringing forward agenda items. It’s part of your right to participate.

Information Required

For effective JHSC meetings, your employer should provide all committee representatives with documents. You need access to relevant information.

In order to be able to resolve the OHS concerns of workers, you should expect to receive:

- ✓ Records of incidents.
- ✓ Written and verbal reports of worksite OHS concerns.
- ✓ Documentation about the employer's work site inspection.
- ✓ Reports from investigations into incidents, potentially serious incidents, or near misses.
- ✓ Reports from investigations into refusals of unsafe work.
- ✓ Access to safety data sheets.
- ✓ Access to other information about worksite hazards, controls, work practices, and procedures.
- ✓ Copies of reports, orders, or other compliance measures ordered by an OHS Officer.
- ✓ Reports from Alberta Occupational Health and Safety.



Legislative requirements – *OHS Act*, Part 1, Section 3(1)(f), Sections 3(4) and 3(4)(a) and 3(7), Part 2, Section 13(6)(d).

Review information provided in advance when possible. If information you need about a matter is not yet available, table the discussion item to a future meeting. Send a formal request to management to seek the documents you need to review.

Decision-making

Remember, JHSCs are *advisory committees* rather than decision-making committees. So, a senior executive for your employer will decide whether to implement specific **recommendations** made by the JHSC.

But the members of your JHSC still must work together to make decisions as a group about committee activities. This includes what recommendations to make in the first place.

Remember to consult your committee's **Terms of Reference** about this. They should describe specific processes for:

- conducting meetings,
- forwarding health and **safety recommendations** to the employer, and for
- resolving disputes when committee members cannot agree.

Generally, the members of a JHSC should aim to reach consensus. That means you should use effective communication and collaboration to achieve unanimity. Consensus requires a structured approach. Reaching consensus also requires compromise. You must find acceptable middle-ground or resolve the issue with acceptable solutions.

Only when consensus can't be achieved through discussion and further proposal should you resort to voting. For some employers, if no consensus is reached there will still not be a vote. Instead, the committee can forward an unresolved issue to the next level of management.

To help with deciding on **recommendations**, you should define the objectives at the outset. Then, try brainstorming and encourage open-mindedness and creativity. Next, evaluate the options, based on criteria like effectiveness, feasibility, and timeliness.

Try to address conflicts constructively. Disagreement is a natural part of decision-making, but you can manage it with open and respectful dialogue. Focus on common ground. Try using decision-making tools, like:

- SWOT analysis (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats),
- Decision matrices, or
- Multi-voting techniques (like star- or dot-voting).

Meeting minutes

Your co-chairs are responsible for ensuring a written record of the meeting is taken. They can do it themselves or identify someone else to take **minutes**. Most committees will select a recording secretary. It's usually easier for a secretary to record minutes and for the chairperson to focus on leading discussion.

The minutes are the written record of the meeting, and they should include:

- ✓ The date and time of the meeting.
- ✓ Members present and if **quorum** is achieved.
- ✓ Guests and other stakeholders present.
- ✓ Matters discussed.
- ✓ Progress of previously addressed items or status of recommendations.
- ✓ Description of concerns brought forward.
- ✓ A list of any reports or policies reviewed. This includes any refusal of unsafe work, incident reports, or a summary of a serious incident investigation.
- ✓ The agreement or dissent of worker representatives about employer positions. This includes any denial of a formal recommendation.

The minutes should not include:

- ✓ The actual reports or policies reviewed.
- ✓ Names or identifying information of workers other than the worker representatives of the committee.

The minute recorder should send a copy to all committee members shortly after the meeting ends. You should verify the minutes are accurate. Send requests for changes to the minute recorder immediately.

The employer must ensure approved minutes are sent or made available to all workers on a worksite. This could be on a company staff portal or intranet service. You should also post the approved JHSC meeting minutes to the union bulletin board at your worksite.

It's preferable you send minutes via email, together with a request to report to worker representatives any OHS concerns. This makes the activities of your JHSC more visible to your co-workers and encourages their input.

Active and effective participation

The work of joint health and safety committees (JHSCs) is meant to be collaborative in nature. Your JHSC should benefit from having diverse members and different perspectives.

To work together, all members have a responsibility to conduct themselves respectfully. You should review these tips for successful meetings of your JHSC:

1. Communicate respectfully – Consider different points of view. Listen actively and acknowledge others' feelings and experiences.
2. Participate in discussions – Share observations, experiences, and concerns related to OHS matters.
3. Focus on improvements and solutions – Concentrate on solving problems, rather than assigning blame for them.
4. Stay focused on health and safety – Co-workers may bring valid and important concerns to you that are not related to health, safety and wellness. So, remind them the JHSC focuses on OHS. And then also refer them to AUPE or other resources, to help address their concern.
5. Show appreciation and maintain a positive attitude – Resolving conflicts is easier when we acknowledge the contributions of others. Also, focus on our shared goal of making the workplace safer and healthier.
6. Follow up on action items / assigned tasks – You should follow through and complete tasks assigned to you. Monitor those assigned to the employer representatives.
7. Politely state dissent and record it in meeting minutes.*

*Sometimes, it may be impossible for you to accept or agree with a position taken by the employer representatives or a decision-maker. This may be especially true then they deny one of the JHSC's formal **recommendations**.

When this happens, plainly state your disagreement at the meeting. And then ensure the meeting **minutes** reflect your disagreement. Doing this means you and your fellow worker representatives 'go on the record' as having taken a position.

It communicates to your co-workers that you were in their corner and felt the employer should've taken a different course of action. And if an incident occurs, there's a record that you warned the employer. You can also ask AUPE staff OHS specialists for support, at ohs.staff@aupe.org.

Karie Burchill



Karie Burchill works at the Yellowhead Youth Centre in Edmonton as a child and youth care counsellor. She was first elected to the worksite joint health and safety committee in 2010. Karie once pressed her employer to call an urgent special meeting of the committee, after a riot broke out at her workplace. Thanks in part to Karie's advocacy, the employer installed new doors with windows, to prevent further incidents.

6. Learn more about health and safety topics

As a worker representative for a JHSC, you need to continuously inform yourself about health and safety hazards. This is especially true about the ones that may be hidden in plain sight at your workplace.






This section provides a brief overview of common hazards and their categories. You need to continuously deepen your knowledge about each of these.

Some hazards interact or overlap with each other to create even more dangerous conditions.

Your goal is to remove these hazards from your workplace. If they cannot be removed, you must make **recommendations** with a solution to control them. The employer must at least control the hazards, to reduce their likelihood and risk associated with them.

Physical hazards

Physical hazards are substances or activities that threaten your body. They are very common and present in all worksites. Physical injuries are often the result of a collision between the human body and some object or machine, or a transfer of energy. Physical hazards include:

-  Temperatures that are too hot or cold.
You are at risk of fatigue, heat stroke, burns, frostbite and hypothermia.
-  Poor air quality.
Dusts, gases, vapours, odours, stale air, and air that's too dry or too humid can all cause symptoms or worse. Air pollution can also be chemical or biological hazards (see below).
-  Noise.
Causes annoyance, stress, interference with listening, and permanent hearing loss.
-  Radiation.
Sunlight, UV lamps for medical or industrial processes, arc welding, radon, microwaves and radiofrequency energy can cause burns, eye disease, and cancer.
-  Assault or violence.
Clients, patients, co-workers, or people from the public can cause direct physical harm to workers. This includes any aggressive behaviour that results in bodily injury.

Slips, trips and falls are one of the most obvious hazards that lead to many avoidable injuries. They can result from poor lighting, trailing cables, uneven or damaged surfaces, unsuitable floor coverings, improper housekeeping, inadequate footwear, and lack of fall protection system.

Ergonomics

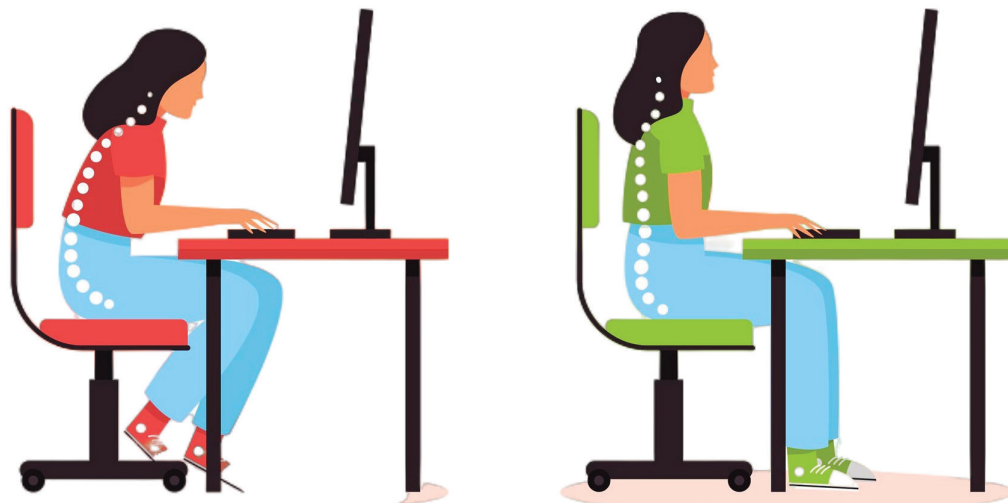
Ergonomics is the study of people's efficiency in their working environment. It's the application of safe and healthy psychological and physiological principles to the engineering and design of products, work processes, and equipment.

Ergonomics is sometimes considered a subset of physical hazards, but it requires more attention. Poor ergonomics cause many injuries, like repetitive strain injuries, musculoskeletal disorders, cardiovascular disease, and cancer.

Some ergonomic hazards include:

- ☹ Inadequate lighting.
Proper lighting makes all work tasks easier and safer.
- ☹ Sitting at work.
More than two hours of continuous static sitting harms you.
- ☹ Standing at work.
You need rest and relief from standing to avoid blood pooling and harm to joints.
- ☹ Vibration.
Intense or frequent exposure to vibrations (like from motorized vehicles or tools) causes neurological, circulatory, bowel, respiratory, and muscular disorders.
- ☹ Repetitive motions.
Work-related musculoskeletal disorders come from overuse and cumulative trauma.

Well-designed workplaces allow the worker to choose from among a variety of balanced working positions. Workers must be able to change between these positions frequently. Workstations and tools should be fit to the worker.



Chemical and biological hazards

Chemical hazards are any substance that can cause harm to your health. Biological hazards are biological substances and pathogens that pose a threat to your health. They're separate categories. They can often be dealt with at the same time because the controls for both are similar.

Toxic substances cause disease by contacting or entering the body in one of four ways:

1. Inhalation – the respiratory system, breathing in contaminated air.
2. Absorption – skin absorbs a toxin, and it can circulate throughout the body.
3. Ingestion – a substance can unwillingly be consumed by eating or drinking.
4. Injection/cut – a substance enters through the site of the lesion.

Chemical and biological hazards are common in most workplaces. Effects can be short-term such as skin irritation, or can be chronic and fatal, such as cancer. They can cause harm to human tissue in a variety of ways. For example, they could cause chemical burns. They can also interfere with normal functioning. For example, they could cause hallucinations or inflammation.

The COVID-19 pandemic heightened our awareness of measures that prevent the spread of viruses in workplaces. Measures that can help reduce viral transmission include:

- ✓ Disinfecting high-touch surfaces,
- ✓ Frequent handwashing,
- ✓ Getting government-approved vaccines,
- ✓ Wearing a well-fitting face mask, and
- ✓ Staying home when sick.



Workers have a right to know about hazardous materials in their workplaces. You need to become familiar with an important system. It provides workers information about substances:

- ➔ **Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)**. WHMIS provides workers with information about hazardous materials and their safe handling. It's meant to effectively communicate hazards to workers through pictograms. WHMIS relies on worker education.
- ➔ Part of this system includes **Safety Data Sheet (SDS)**. They're required for any chemical that can be dangerous. Employers should make SDSs readily available to workers, at the worksite. SDSs should be updated every two years or more frequently as required. These sheets provide information on routes of entry, first aid, emergency responses, and methods of control.

To learn how biological or chemical substances may harm you, use one of several useful databases:

- o CAREX Canada <https://www.carexcanada.ca>
- o PubChem <https://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>
- o ChemIDplus <https://chem.nlm.nih.gov/chemidplus/chemidlite.jsp>
- o CHEMINFO <http://ccinfoweb.ccohs.ca/cheminfo/search.html>



Legislative Requirements – OHS Code, Parts 4, 29, and 35.

Psychosocial hazards and workplace violence

Psychosocial hazards are dangers from the social environment. They are also psychological factors that can affect human health and safety. They can harm you:

- anatomy (your body's structures),
- physiology (internal biochemical functioning), and
- psychology (thought processes).

Examples of psychosocial hazards include:

- ☹ Working alone.

Workers who go for a period of time when they cannot be seen or heard by another person are more vulnerable.

Legislative requirement – *OHS Code*, Part 28.

- ☹️ Fatigue.
Inadequate sleep or disruption of your body’s internal rhythm is a major hazard.
- ☹️ Violence.
A threat, attempt, or actual conduct of a person that causes physical or psychological harm. Experiencing violence can lead to stress, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Even witnessing violence can have these effects.
- ☹️ Harassment or bullying.
A single or repeated incident of objectionable or unwelcome conduct, comment, or bullying. It includes conduct because of race, gender, or a sexual proposition.

Your employer is required by law to ensure your workplace is free from harassment and violence. You and all workers are prohibited from participating in harassment and violence.

Legislative requirement – *OHS Act*, Part 1, Sections 3(1)(c) and 5(1)(d).

Unfortunately, violence, harassment, or bullying are everyday realities at many workplaces. An increasing number of AUPE members experience these hazards. It’s especially true for those who work in health care, social services, and other public services across Alberta. Family or domestic violence also spills into the workplace.

Consequently, preventing violence in the workplace is one of the most crucial issues facing JHSCs today.

Employers must have clear policies against violence, harassment, bullying, and discrimination. They must implement a violence prevention plan in consultation with the JHSC.

Legislative requirements – *OHS Code*, Part 27, Sections 390.1 to 392.

You also need to ensure the employer provides workers training to recognize warning signs of violence. Employers must train workers how to diffuse potentially volatile situations.

Security measures like access control, surveillance, and emergency response plans can enhance safety.

AUPE and workplace safety activists campaign so that “violence is not part of the job.”

Health effects of employment

Few OHS professionals identify work itself as an occupational hazard. Yet, many jobs are poorly designed. And most people usually report that work is the biggest source of stress in their lives. Many workers have a low degree of control over their work. Disorganization, excessive workload, long hours, pace of work, and other pressures can all harm a worker's well-being.

Examples of work that often cause negative health outcomes include:

- ☹ Shift work – work outside of regular weekday hours interrupts circadian rhythms.
- ☹ Extended work hours – more than 40 hours a week.
- ☹ Emotional labour – work requiring workers to display or regulate their emotions.
- ☹ Precarious employment – insecure jobs or those with limited benefits and low wages.

Job stress spills over into workers' home lives. Because of job conditions, workers can experience:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| ☹ anxiety, | ☹ substance abuse, |
| ☹ burnout, | ☹ depression, |
| ☹ emotional exhaustion, | ☹ diabetes, |
| ☹ sleeping disorders, | ☹ heart disease, |
| ☹ weight gain, | ☹ and cancer. |

For these reasons, your JHSC may need to examine more than the physical environment.

OHS concerns can include work organization, workload, and even social and economic conditions. Layoffs and hiring freezes are issues affecting workplace safety.

So, improving your collective agreement can help. Try to negotiate better provisions about layoff and recall, severance, **grievance** language, and benefits.



Working short

The reality of being expected to do more work with less – less time, fewer co-workers, and less resources – is what AUPE calls “working short.” It’s when your employer fails to hire, retain, train, provide, or schedule adequate staffing.

And so those remaining on the job are left scrambling and in unsafe circumstances. AUPE runs campaigns to fight back and demand improved investments in the public services Albertans deserve.

You should stay up to date: <https://aupe.org/news-and-publications/campaigns>.

Emergency preparedness and response

Your employer’s health and safety program should also include an emergency response plan. That plan must deal with situations that require rescue or evacuation. Emergencies your plan should identify include:

- ☹️ Fire.
- ☹️ Extreme weather and natural disasters.
- ☹️ Bomb threats, hostage taking, or active shooter scenarios.

Your employer must involve affected workers when establishing the emergency response plan. It’s required by law. Your JHSC should periodically review the plan and recommend improvements.

Legislative Requirement – *OHS Code*, Part 7, Sections 115(1) and (2).



Remember, the information in this section is a brief overview of some hazards that you can encounter at work. To remove or control hazards, you must learn as much as you can about them. This is an on-going process of self-education and raising awareness among your fellow workers. Learning and educating about hazards (and how to control them!) is a continuous process.



Need more information about specific hazards? Or wondering where pros find in-depth coverage of OHS issues? You should bookmark and explore the website. <https://www.ccohs.ca>. Established in 1978 and based in Hamilton, Ontario, the CCOHS is run by the federal government and promotes the well-being of workers by providing information, training and programs.

7. Inspect your workplace

Worksite inspections are a common, effective method used by JHSCs to identify hazards.

Protect and exercise your right to participate

Since a 2020 amendment to Alberta's *OHS Act* called Bill 47, your employer is no longer required to enable the JHSC to conduct workplace inspections. Instead, the employer only must provide you documentation about its own inspection, for the JHSC to review.

Legislative requirement – *OHS Act*, Part 2, Section 13(6)(d)

AUPE opposes this severe and unnecessary limitation on your right to participate in workplace safety. Worker representatives of JHSCs should regularly participate in formal workplace inspections. Inspecting the workplace improves workers' technical knowledge of OHS. And it's effective because inspections rely in part on workers' own job- and task-specific knowledge.

The decision to stop you from inspecting the worksite as a normal duty of the JHSC runs counter to the logic of the internal responsibility system. This system only functions when workers are involved. Stopping worker representatives from doing worksite inspections severely undermines the relevance of JHSCs.

If your employer attempts to stop your JHSC from conducting workplace inspections, you have several options. You should bargain for this right. Try to negotiate language in your collective agreement that protects workplace inspections as an ongoing duty of the JHSC. Your collective agreement should require inspections at regular frequencies (at least quarterly). Ask AUPE staff OHS specialists for support, ohs.staff@aupe.org.

Despite the legislative change, many employers continue to use the JHSCs for worksite inspections.

Benefits and frequency of inspections

Formal workplace inspections help you to:

- ✓ Make sure that all existing controls are implemented and effective.
- ✓ Identify hazards.
- ✓ Discuss health and safety issues with workers while they perform job tasks.

Inspections should happen at regular intervals. It's best practice to inspect low-hazard work areas quarterly, and to conduct inspections more often in high-risk areas. The frequency of inspections should be established in your committee's **Terms of Reference**.



As well, a workplace inspection should occur at any time there is a change in circumstances at a worksite in any way that could create a hazard to workers. This includes changes such as new equipment, new supplies, and new work processes or operations. You should do the inspection related to such changes before work begins.

The law specifies when an employer must ensure that a hazard assessment is repeated, which may or may not entail an inspection.

Legislative Requirement – *OHS Code*, Part 2, Section 7(4)(a) to (d).



A good inspection should:

- 😊 Examine both the equipment as well as work processes. That means observing the skills of workers operating equipment and the environment they work in.
- 😊 Include all different shifts, as there may be different hazards at different times of the day or with different workers present.
- 😊 Rely on the contributions of a whole team. You need people who are familiar with your employer's OHS policies and procedures, the layout of the worksite, and access to all locations.
- 😊 Take place during normal hours of work.
- 😊 Involve the workers as they perform their normal tasks, operate equipment, and engage in work procedures.
- 😊 Focus on identifying hazards, with the goal of removing them or controlling them. They should be positive and are not about finding fault. The goal of the exercise is to prevent incidents.

Three steps for inspecting your workplace for hazards

1. Prepare for the inspection.

Review an appropriate inspection checklist. Checklists help ensure you inspect all aspects. Keep in mind, you should customize the checklist to the work area being inspected. Also remember, checklists are only a guideline. You must 'look beyond' the checklist to see other hazards. Assemble the team. Include a variety of people on the inspection team. Make sure you include someone from the work area. It's important to also include someone from outside that work area.



Sample Checklists for Formal Worksite Hazard Inspections, By Workplace Type

<https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/prevention/effectiv.html>

Review past inspection reports. Search them for items that now need to be reviewed or haven't yet been inspected.

Plan the inspection route. Use a map to help make sure all parts of a site are covered and to help identify hazards that may not be on the checklist.

Assemble any personal protective equipment that will be required.

2. Conduct the inspection.

You're searching for clues like a detective. Use all your powers of observation. Remember, many hazards aren't in plain sight. Others are hiding in plain sight but simply aren't immediately evident. We tend to focus on visible hazards. So, we must pay special attention to the hazards that are harder to see, like chemical hazards, energy sources, and psychosocial hazards.

Does a condition, circumstance, or substance create the possibility of illness or injury? If it does, you've identified a hazard and should document and record it.

Ask operators to demonstrate tasks. Ask workers to identify hazards to you. Avoid interrupting work unnecessarily. But also remember that inspections are meant to involve workers. They have a right to participate in workplace safety activities.

If you find a danger during your inspection that's likely to cause serious or immediate harm, act right away! Report it to management. Exercise judgement and determine if it's necessary to block access or shut down equipment.

Take notes, with clear descriptions and locations of all hazards you identify.

3. Write a summary including causes and assessing the level of risk.

When possible, try to assess the proximate and root causes of each hazard you identified. The proximate cause is the event or condition that could lead to an incident. Root causes are the "real" or underlying factor that led to those immediate hazardous conditions.

For example, your hazard inspection could uncover maintenance or housekeeping issues. But the underlying issue and root cause might be the employer's choice of equipment or a product.

A helpful method of identifying the root cause of any hazard or incident is the "five whys" of root cause analysis. Repeatedly ask "why" a condition exists. Each time you answer the question, repeat "why" again. In this way, interrogating and investigating the situation, you can come to understand the root cause.

Using your documentation of identified hazards from the site inspection, you can assess the level of risk. Consider the severity of the risk, the probability of occurrence, and the frequency of worker exposure to the hazard. Doing this helps you determine the priority of hazards and the controls the JHSC can recommend.

Recheck previous inspection reports and compare them to yours. If they identify the same hazard that you found, either a control was missing or the control is inadequate. This is a flag that your JHSC needs to rethink the approach to removing or controlling a specific hazard.



For more suggestions about how to get the most out of formal workplace inspections:

"Effective Workplace Inspections," CCOHS

<https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/prevention/effectiv.html>

Wally Howe



Wally Howe works at the Foothills Medical Centre in Calgary, as a stores and distribution worker. He first joined his workplace joint committee in 2010. Wally is a proud recipient of AUPE's Rolyn Sumlak Award, for outstanding contributions to OHS in Alberta. Thanks to Wally's advocacy, his employer installed special filters on the air intake system. This protected his coworkers from the carcinogenic effects of diesel fumes that had been entering the building. Wally's health and safety mantra is "If you SEE something, SAY something, and DO something."

8. Identify hazards and audit your workplace

Workers themselves are your most valuable resource when identifying hazards. The internal responsibility system relies on workers to report concerns. To be effective, your JHSC needs to foster a positive culture of safety. That means involving affected workers.

Addressing Worker Concerns

JHSCs are responsible for receiving, considering, and forwarding workers' OHS concerns and complaints.

Your employer must involve affected workers in hazard assessments and in the control or elimination of identified hazards. It's required by law.

Legislative requirements – *OHS Act*, Part 3, Section 6(a), *OHS Code*, Part 2, Section 8(1)



Your employer's unique **Health and Safety Program** should include a reporting mechanism.

Workers should report their concerns using that reporting mechanism. For example, MySafetyNet (MSN) is used at Alberta Health Services and 1GX at the Government of Alberta.

Workers should also report concerns directly to their manager, and to members of the JHSC.

The employer should follow up with the worker who reported the issue.

If the employer does not respond to the worker or resolve the issue, the worker should follow up with the JHSC. You should also report the matter to AUPE. You can report OHS concerns to AUPE using your union's **OHS Issue Reporting Form**:



<https://www.aupe.org/member-resources/forms/ohs-reporting-form>

You may also wish to check if your Membership Services Officer (MSO) is aware of the issue. It's possible your MSO is already working on the matter because someone else reported it.

Sometimes, a concern is addressed immediately by a manager. Other times, the JHSC should investigate and make a **recommendation**.

Identifying hazards and participating in the employer's hazard assessment are part of the duties of JHSCs. So, worker representatives should recognize a variety of methods used to identify and assess hazards. The next section explores some helpful techniques for this.

Involve workers in a variety of hazard identification methods

You should use a variety of different methods to identify and assess hazards in the workplace.

Over-reliance on worksite inspections can be risky. Some hazards are difficult to identify, especially ones that lead to occupational disease. Some hazards can be more easily revealed with other methods.

The five methods discussed here are particularly effective at involving workers in hazard assessment. You can use these methods at a group meeting and gather more information than what's possible through observation.

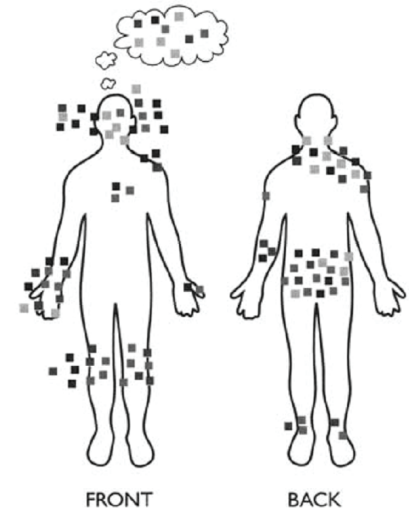
Taken together, the information gathered and visually illustrated with these methods can reveal patterns.

Some helpful hazard assessment methods include:

(1) **Body maps** help workers pinpoint health problems arising from work. They help you determine whether fellow workers share symptoms. Body maps are:


- An effective tool for individuals or groups to identify musculoskeletal disorders and a variety of occupational diseases.
- An outline of the front and back of the body, on which participants pinpoint their symptoms.
- A way to identify effects by occupation, gender, age, job, department, location, seniority, or some other category.

A body map



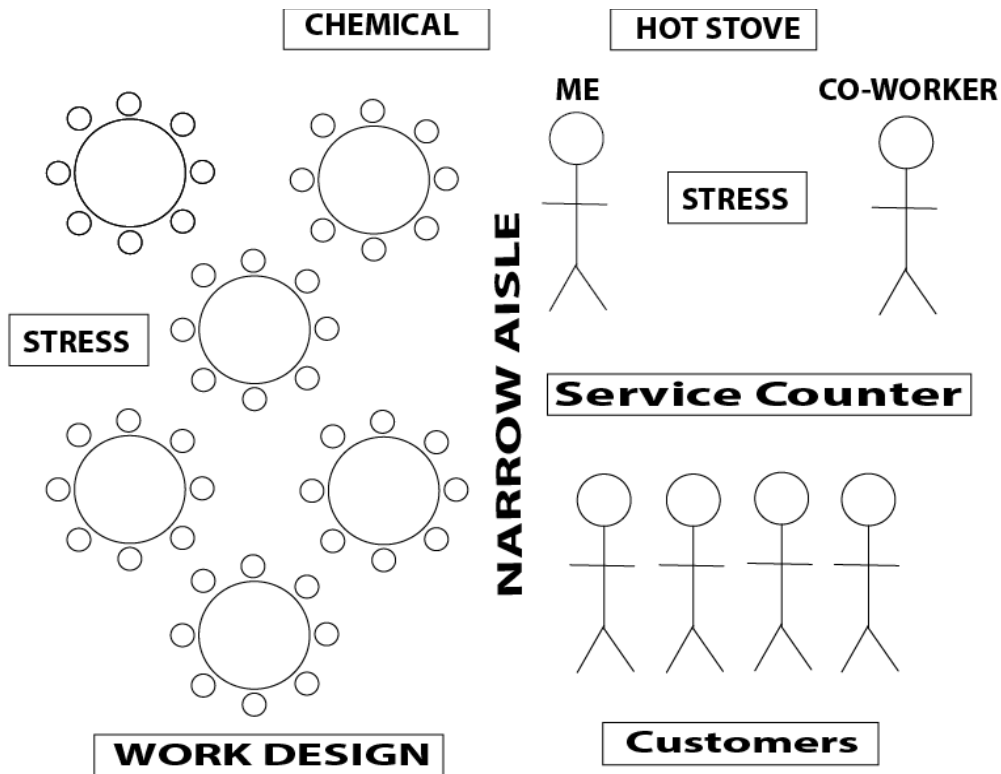
FRONT BACK

AUPE, "Poster – Body Map Front and Back,"
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rMicDwrpkD7UscQixp_I6WD12okooUt/view



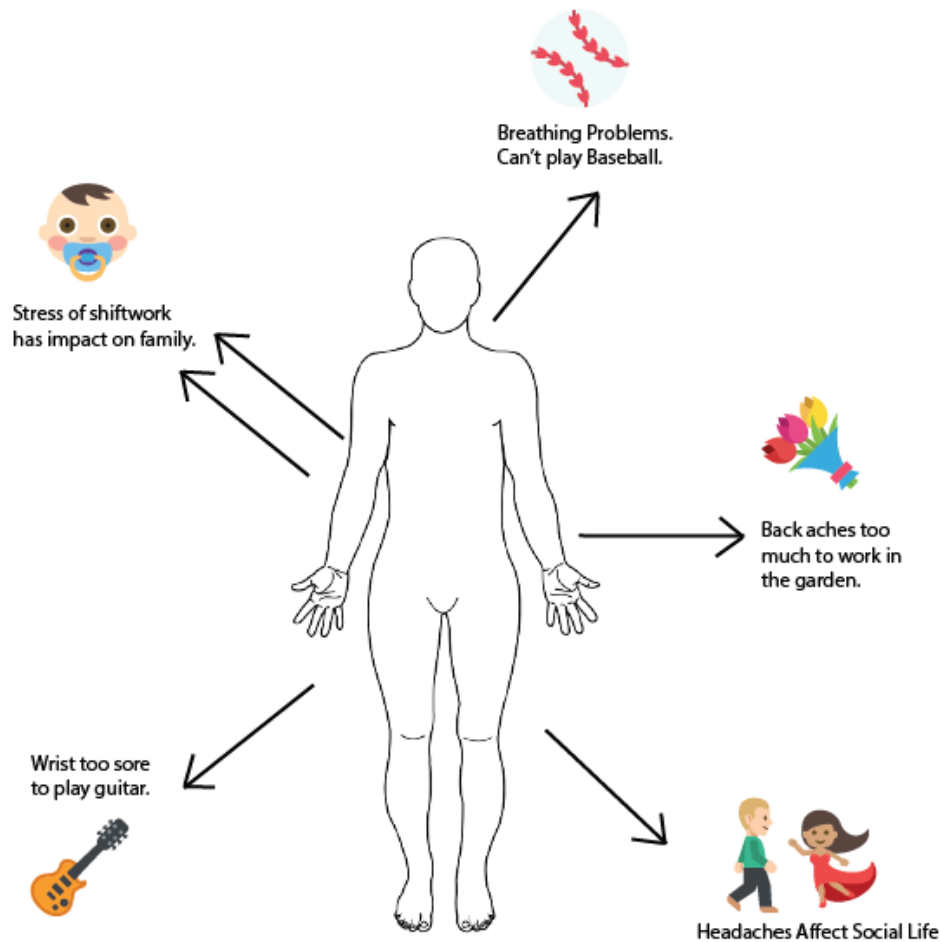
(2) **Workplace maps** allow you to visualize where hazards and risks are in your work site. You can:

- Use technical drawings or a hand-drawn diagram of work areas.
- Label the maps with doorways, aisles, windows, machinery, equipment, vehicles, etc
- Use coloured symbols representing types of hazards and stick figures representing co-workers.



(3) **World maps** assist workers to reveal connections between pains or stresses caused by their job, and problems in their personal lives outside the workplace. World maps are:

- A method for affected workers to discover how personal issues are work-related, and then to find support.
- A kind of mind map. It's a drawing of a worker's body. Use lines radiating out to issues you identify. Use symbols, pictures, or words. Describe connections between them.
- Helpful to workers exploring the effects and impact their job is having on their whole life. This includes job impacts on their family, relationships, quality of life, recreation, social lives, community involvement, and mental and emotional health.



Hazards Magazine, "Worked Over: World Mapping Looks at the Impact of the Job on Your Whole Life,"
<http://www.hazards.org/haz75/worldmapping.pdf>

(4) A **Job Inventory & Task Map** helps you systemically list the risks posed by all the work activities you undertake, step by step.

- It’s a detailed examination of each step involved in how a duty, job, or assignment is accomplished. This includes both manual and mental activities.
- Map out the flow of work by listing each task. Break down a job into a sequence of basic steps. Then, identify the hazards associated with each task or step, and controls to overcome them.
- Compare this data with worker interviews. That way, you can identify instances where work practices differ from formal and written procedures.

Sample Job Safety Analysis Worksheet

Job: Exchange a leaking tire with a spare tire

Analysis by: Safety Rep	Date: March 12, 2024	Approved: Co-Chair
Task Sequence	Risk or Hazard	Preventative Measures
Park Vehicle	a) passing traffic b) ground uneven, too soft	a) drive to area clear of traffic b) turn on emergency flashers c) apply parking break
Remove spare tire and tool kit	a) drop on hands b) strain from lifting	a) put on gloves b) turn spare into upright position, lift using legs and stand as close as possible
Pry off hubcap and loosen bolts	a) lug wrench may slip	a) ...



For advice about task maps described here, visit: CCOHS, “Job Safety Analysis”
<https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/job-haz.html>

(5) **Worker interviews are crucial.** That's how you get the perspective of people actually doing the work. Interviews help you verify that information from other sources is accurate and complete.

- Get the perspective of people doing the work. Do this informally, through discussion. Or do it formally, through interviews, focus group discussions, or surveys.
- Basic steps include set up, prepare, data collection, and follow-up.
- Seek out work practices that differ from formal procedures. Take notes. Later, compare information gathered from interviews with other data. This helps you identify hazards, skill or knowledge gaps, and training needs.

Remember, employers must involve workers in assessing and controlling hazards. Using a combination of the participatory techniques described above will help do this!

In addition, you may wish to consider one other important method for assessing hazards. JHSCs may be able to access records and data.

Reviewing records of previous workplace incidents, safety reports, and other documentation can yield useful information about workplace hazards.

Use testing and measuring with caution

In some instances, your JHSC may decide to request measuring and testing. Sometimes, to discover if something is a hazard, you will need to measure or test it. This is particularly true for noise and hazards that cause occupational diseases. That includes chemical and biological hazards.

Just be aware, there are problems with relying on testing to determine if a substance is a hazard or not. Firstly, there's no such thing as a "tricorder" like those used in the fictional Star Trek universe. Occupational hygienists don't have reliable handheld sensors to scan the environment and record workplace hazards.

Rather, safety professionals must take measurements using specialized tests and equipment for specific substances. But what happens if the symptoms of workers are caused by a *different* substance? This means costly and time-consuming tests can miss real hazards.

Furthermore, key assumptions about many **occupational exposure limits** (OELs) are likely flawed. The legal limits set for exposures to specific substances are oftentimes arbitrary. We see this because different countries establish different limits. So, OELs are not fine lines between 'safe' and dangerous levels of exposure.



Legislative requirement – *OHS Code*, Part 4, Section 16 and Schedule 1, Table 2.

OELs are sometimes outdated. Even if up to date, they assume the main route of exposure is respiratory (airborne). But, many substance exposures occur through skin absorption or ingestion.

For this reason, some hazardous substances, such as cytotoxic medications, do not have OELs. Yet, exposure to these substances without proper personal protective equipment (PPE) can cause cancer.

OELs are based on specified lengths of time for exposure. But those times vary from real life exposures, which oftentimes are *much longer*.

Finally, it's impossible to determine whether a *particular* worker will develop cancer or another occupational disease with a lower level of exposure than the set limit. OELs are set at levels that should protect "nearly all" workers. That's *not* "all" workers.

Measuring and testing for noise and harmful substances can be very helpful. But, if your JHSC decides to proceed, be aware of the pitfalls. This section examined some shortcomings of both testing and **occupational exposure limits**.

9. Assess the level of risk and consider controls

The previous two sections of this booklet help you to *identify hazards*. They describe workplace inspections and methods to involve workers in hazard assessments. But what comes next?

Once you've identified a hazard, you can assess the level of risk involved. This helps you determine which hazards to prioritize. Then, you need to look at ways to remove or control the hazards.

Risk Assessment

This step in the hazard assessment process involves evaluating the risk that known hazards will lead to an injury event or illness.

In this step, the JHSC determine which of the hazards needs to be addressed most urgently.

To analyze the risk that a hazard poses, you should determine the:

- Frequency of exposure to the hazard.
- Probability that the hazard will cause an incident, and;
- Potential consequences or severity if an incident does occur.

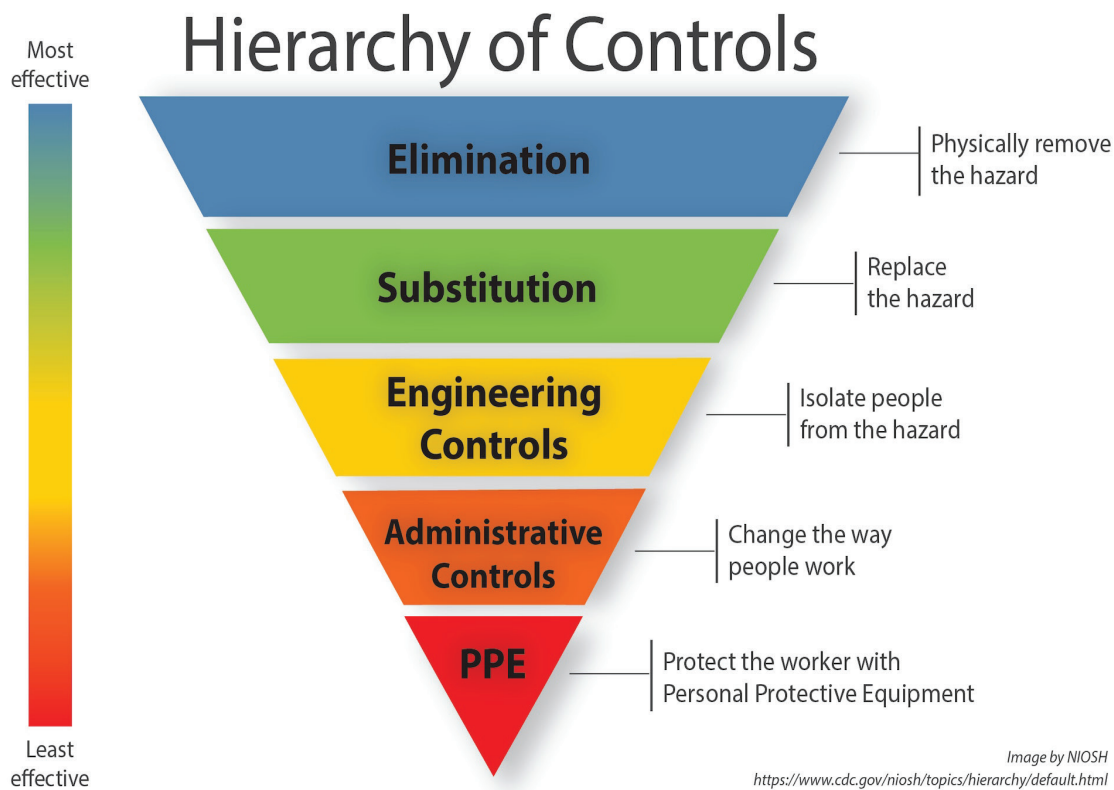
A risk assessment is not mandatory. Some workers prefer to omit this step, because they view any level of risk as too much risk.

See the resources section at the back of this booklet for three templates of hazard assessment and control reports that you can use!

Hierarchy of Controls

Perhaps the most important activity of JHSCs is to identify the best possible controls for hazards. That means reducing the hazard levels that present a risk to worker health.

There are different forms of hazard controls. Some methods of controlling hazards are more effective than others. So, we can describe controls in order of preference, called a hierarchy of controls.



Whenever possible, hazards should be **eliminated**. If it is not possible to eliminate the hazard then it must be controlled. In decreasing order of priority, the controls in the hierarchy are:

1. **Elimination** removes the hazard from the worksite.
 - Example: relocating work performed at a height to ground level eliminates the risk of falling.
 - Effectiveness: Elimination or removal of the hazard is the safest form of hazard control.

- 2. Substitution** entails replacing something that produces a hazard with something that does not. Often, OHS practitioners refer to “safer” substitution. That’s because sometimes the substitute also poses a hazard, just to a lesser degree.

 - Example: replace chemical-based cleaning solvents with plant oil-based solvents.
 - Effectiveness: Substitution is less effective than elimination. The new object or process may introduce different hazards, or fail to completely remove the original hazard
- 3. Engineering controls** are modifications to the workplace to isolate the hazard. This can include using equipment, materials, or processes that reduce exposure to hazards.

 - Examples: installing guards, installing ventilation systems, purchasing ergonomically designed workstations.
 - Effectiveness: These controls can be incomplete. They may become inoperative, due to lack of maintenance. They may be overridden. Therefore, they are less effective than elimination or substitution.
- 4. Administrative controls** change the way people work, in order to manage the hazard. This is done through process, policies, training, or rules designed to reduce exposure to hazards.

 - Examples: policies restricting the time workers spend in contact with a chemical hazard, mandatory training sessions, permit systems that control access to equipment or spaces, rules to prevent excessive shift work, working-alone procedures like regular check-ins.
 - Effectiveness: Administrative controls do not actually control a hazard. Rather, they attempt (via rules and processes) to limit workers’ exposure to the hazard.
- 5. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** is special equipment worn by workers. It’s designed to protect them when they encounter a hazard.

 - Examples: helmets, goggles, gloves, and fall protection systems.
 - Effectiveness: PPE is the least effective control. It doesn’t control or restrict contact with the hazard. Instead, it imposes a burden on the worker to properly and consistently wear or use the PPE. Further, most PPE has historically been designed for a male body. This can compromise its effectiveness when worn by women.

Employers often tend to prefer options lower on the hierarchy. Those options usually cost less and have a smaller impact on the work process. Workers, on the other hand, strongly prefer controls higher on the hierarchy. That's because those controls much more effective at keeping them safe.

According to the law:

- Employers should try to use elimination or substitution to remove the hazard first.
- If it's not possible to remove the hazard, the employer should try to control the hazard by engineering means.
- Only after reviewing the practicability of the above should the employer use administration or PPE.

Legislative Requirements – *OHS Code*, Part 2, Sections 7, 8 and 9.



Often multiple controls can be combined to provide a higher degree of control. For example, adding together protective equipment and reducing exposure time is better than either of those controls alone.

When first addressing a hazard, it may be necessary to use PPE or administration until a more permanent control can be implemented. That said, it is important to not delay the implementation of a more effective control.

Employers have flexibility in how they control hazards. But that flexibility is not permission to disregard the obligation to use the most effective hazard control.

Legal terms 101: “reasonably practicable”
<https://shorturl.at/xJzO7>



The law allows an employer get away with introducing a control lower down on the hierarchy. The employer must claim successfully that implementing a more effective control is not “**reasonably practicable**.” This term limits the precautions an employer must take. The employer doesn't need to implement the best possible controls. The employer can choose ones that are suitable or rational, given a particular situation.

Unfortunately, it sometimes becomes the job of worker representatives of the JHSC to push back. You need to persuade the employer that options higher up on the hierarchy of controls are indeed both reasonable and practicable.

Ankur Pandey



Ankur Pandey works at the Calgary Remand Centre as a Correctional Peace Officer. He was first elected to his joint worksite health and safety committee in 2023. Ankur noticed his employer would make some safety improvements. For example, the employer replaced expired safety vests with new dual threat safety vests and replaced expired pepper spray. But big and more costly safety projects like fencing off the workers' parking lot will require more advocacy. Ankur has been a strong supporter of workers' psychological health and safety.

10. Research solutions and write recommendations

After you've identified a hazard, you need to gain more information about it and research the best possible options to control it. In this step, you get to improve your research and writing skills. You need to locate up-to-date and reliable information. You must sort through it and make sense of it. Then, make informed recommendations in writing. Read on to see how.

Research solutions

Do the homework for your JHSC. Gain as much knowledge as you can about the **hazard** in question, and a variety of possible controls. Use reliable sources of information, like the ones discussed here.

1. Look at the policies and procedures of your employer's **Health and Safety Program** and in the **terms of reference**.
2. Carefully read factsheets and other information from the **Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)**. If you only use one source, this should be it. Worker representatives should review the resources and services available:
<https://www.ccohs.ca>
3. Our provincial government offers an OHS Portal. It provides information in a variety of languages on various workplace safety topics and specific to a variety of industries:
<https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca>
4. Take more AUPE training. This is an excellent way to continue learning about specific hazards and controls. Your union offers four OHS courses, available in-person and online:
 - *Effective Joint Health and Safety Committees: Training for Co-Chairs and Worker Representatives*
 - *Intro to OHS*
 - *OHS for Union Activists*
 - *Advanced OHS*

Check the schedule of upcoming courses, and register yourself online now at <https://www.aupe.org/training>. You can request support from registrar@aupe.org.

Remember, when researching solutions to the hazard you're dealing with, you should follow the **hierarchy of controls**.

You can take into consideration several factors when considering a recommendation, such as:

- Feasibility
- Timeliness,
- Evidence from other worksites,
- Experience of other workers or OHS specialists.

Try to choose the best solution from the perspective of workers. This will be a solution that doesn't shift the burden for a hazard control towards workers.

Write a Recommendation

The JHSC must make recommendations to the employer respecting the health and safety of workers. It's perhaps the most fundamental purpose of your JHSC.

After you've chosen the most desirable control(s) to address a safety issue, you will have to write a formal recommendation.

A **recommendation** is a written statement, from the JHSC to the employer. It summarizes both a workplace health and safety issue and a proposed solution.

Recommendations may be made to:

- ✓ Change specific work practices or conditions.
- ✓ Remove or mitigate hazards, identified in inspections or otherwise
- ✓ Eliminate or correct root causes of incidents identified by investigations.
- ✓ Perform studies or bring in outside experts.

Your recommendations should:

- ✓ Be written.
- ✓ Be dated.
- ✓ Include an individual identification code.
- ✓ Usually include only one health and safety concern at a time.
- ✓ State facts about the health and safety concern.
- ✓ Point out any potential violation of safety laws. Cite relevant sections of the *OHS Act* and *OHS Code*. And always include section 3 of the *OHS Act*, about the employer's general duty ensure the health, safety and welfare of workers and others.
- ✓ State the specific measures about each concern. This can include temporary measures if you must wait for a more permanent measure you also recommend.
- ✓ Give the reason(s) for the recommendation.
- ✓ Describe the intended immediate outcomes and long-term benefits.
- ✓ Be signed by co-chairs of the joint committee.
- ✓ Be tracked in the **minutes** of committee meetings.

Worker representatives need to practice writing clear, effective, and persuasive recommendations. You should:

- 😊 Write the recommendation using the help of a template or in the format of a business letter or memorandum.
- 😊 Address your recommendation to its recipients by name. This will be the person (or people) within your organization to whom the JHSC reports. Include the decision-makers or other relevant stakeholders. In other words, you're writing to those with the authority to implement your recommendation.
- 😊 Include separate sections to describe the hazard, your assessment, and the recommended control (or combination of controls).
- 😊 Follow any established processes. Your employer may have specific practices for writing and submitting the recommendation.

- 😊 If required, provide cost estimates and expected work interruptions to implement the measure. Show how these are **reasonably practicable** given the alternatives.
- 😊 Include a timeline for the solution as well as the date by which the JHSC expects or needs to hear a reply.
- 😊 Provide detailed rationale for the recommendation. It can be helpful to contrast your desirable solution with less attractive alternatives.

Refer to the resources section of this booklet for a helpful template for a formal recommendation form.

Let's review a simple example of **recommendation** writing for an easy-to-solve hazard.

Scenario:

Ice has accumulated in the parking lot of your worksite in a few locations. A worker checked her union bulletin board. She saw that a colleague she knew, Jasminder, is one of the elected worker representatives of the worksite JHSC.

She reported the ice to Jasminder, who realized that it posed an immediate slip, trip and fall hazard. Because the hazard was serious and urgent, she emailed a request to her co-chairs to please call a **special meeting** of the JHSC to discuss. To prepare, Jasminder did some basic homework. She reviewed relevant information available from reliable sources. This included her employer's housekeeping procedures. It also included the website of the CCOHS, where she found and read a useful factsheet about "Parking Lots – Fall Prevention."

Then, Jasminder brainstormed what she thought would be the best possible combination of controls. She chose controls as high up on the **hierarchy of controls** as possible. This way, she arrived at the meeting prepared to propose short-term and long-term solutions. She met thirty minutes ahead of time with only her fellow worker representatives. That way, they could plan how they'd persuade the employer representatives to agree to the more costly aspects of their proposal. They arrived with a draft written **recommendation**.

They wrote:**1. Describe the concern, issue, or hazard. Include the location, your assessment, and proximate and root causes, if known.**

Ice has accumulated in the parking lot in three known locations. It poses an immediate and serious threat of injury to workers and visitors.

A review of reported incidents shows four known falls have occurred this winter.

The main parking lot poses a significant and special hazard at our workplace. Leaks, uneven surfaces, and accumulating snow create slip, trip and fall hazards.

See attached the map of the parking lot with known hazard locations. See also the .jpeg files of photos of the icy location, hidden beneath snow.

2. Proposed recommendation in a few short phrases.

The joint health and safety committee recommends the employer:

- 1) As soon as possible, hire a part-time seasonal maintenance person dedicated to snow removal. Or contract a snow removal company, to prevent accumulation and ice from forming.
- 2) By end of this week, request a contractor to provide a sand container and broom / shovel station at the icy locations.
- 3) Send maintenance staff once daily (before arrival of morning shift) to check for ice, and apply sand as required.
- 4) Immediately purchase and post bright warning signs at the icy locations.
- 5) Immediately communicate to all staff a warning about the ice hazard. Also communicate a timeline for the new measures, above. Encourage staff to choose safer non-slip footwear, and to report icy patches to the maintenance team.

3. Detailed description of the recommendation and rationale.

Good housekeeping in terms of parking lots means repairing any damage and removing snow, spills, and ice, as soon as possible.

The employer has an obligation under the OHS Act, Section 3(1) to ensure the health, safety and welfare of workers and other persons at the worksite. Under Part 12 of the OHS Code, section 185, the employer must take general safety precautions to keep the work site clean and free from materials, like ice, that can cause workers to slip or trip.

There have been four known and reported incidents this winter. Current measures are clearly inadequate to prevent further incidents. Failure to take immediately preventative actions will likely result in:

- more near misses or injury incidents,
- a report to workers' Compensation, and
- lost time.

warning staff and asking them to both use proper footwear and report icy patches are good measures. But alone they're insufficient. These administrative controls and the use of PPE shift responsibility to workers. While more costly, the employer must invest in adequate engineering controls. That means removing the hazard by increasing spending on parking lot maintenance. These costs are normal and in line with best practices of other organizations.

Outcome:

At the **special meeting**, the worker co-chair shared the draft written recommendation with the employer representatives. Jasminder spoke about conversations she'd had with friends, who work at other organizations. In those workplaces, snow and ice removal in the parking lots were the norm, despite the costs.

Together, the worker representatives persuaded the employer representatives to accept their proposal. They agreed to make a few improvements to the proposal. Then, the co-chairs sent the formal **recommendation** to the Executive Director in an urgent email.

The above scenario and written recommendation simplify what can happen in the process for writing recommendations.

Keep in mind, the **terms of reference** for your JHSC should describe a process for resolving disputes. When committee members cannot agree on a recommendation to the employer, you should follow those steps.



Legislative Requirements – *OHS Act*, Part 2, Section 13(6)(c), *OHS Code*, Part 13, Section 197(g)

Alberta's OHS laws don't specify what employers must do in response to committee recommendations. So, try to negotiate rules in your **collective agreement** about what the employer must do in response to a committee recommendation.

11. Report and Investigate Incidents

Under the **internal responsibility system**, it's a duty of all workers to report hazards, near misses, and health and safety incidents.

The JHSC is to receive, consider and address the concerns that workers raise about OHS matters.

Legislative Requirements – *OHS Act*, Part 1, Section 5(1)(e), Part 2, Section 13(6)(a)



Report OHS concerns

Worker representatives play a crucial role encouraging fellow workers to report OHS concerns. This fosters a positive **culture of safety**. Workers are more likely to report concerns if they believe that their concerns will be taken seriously and addressed.

Reporting concerns is preventative. An example is a worker reporting they've spotted ice on the sidewalk in the parking lot. By addressing hazards before they cause incidents, we can reduce workplace injuries and illnesses.

Did you know?

You and your co-workers should report your OHS concerns to your employer's JHSC. In addition, you can also report concerns to your union. Use AUPE's OHS issue reporting form: <https://www.aupe.org/member-resources/forms/ohs-reporting-form>.



This form is for any AUPE member to notify AUPE's OHS staff about an unresolved workplace safety or health concern. AUPE's OHS staff specialists review all submissions. They may respond directly. Or, they forward the concern to the appropriate Membership Services Officer (MSO). AUPE does not send this information to the employer.

Report OHS incidents

Reporting incidents is different than reporting OHS concerns. Incident reports are what happens *after* there's been a near miss or an injury event.

An example of an OHS incident is Jane Doe slipped on the ice in parking lot at 8:17 am on Wed, March 13. She fell and broke her left wrist. She missed work and will require an accommodation for her job duties. That's because she can no longer type until her injury heals, at least six weeks. Reporting incidents can be more complicated when there's murky causation. That's often the case for occupational disease.

Your employer must have a **health and safety program**. As part of this, your employer should have a formal reporting system. Here are three examples of formal reporting systems:

- ✓ Alberta Health Services uses MySafetyNet (MSN).
- ✓ The Government of Alberta uses 1GX.
- ✓ Covenant Care provides its employees with an "Incident Reporting & Information Phone Line", at 780-342-8070 or 1-855-342-8070.

The law allows every employer to establish its own unique means of meeting legislative requirements. This includes how workers report incidents.

Employers have a duty to record incidents, and to report injuries to the Alberta Workers' Compensation Board and to the government. In short, the employer must report to government any injury or illness or incident in which a worker either has been or could be admitted to hospital.



Legislative Requirement - *Workers' Compensation Act*, Sections 32 and 33, *OHS Act* Part 7, Section 33.

The employer should pass along incident reports to the JHSC. Ideally, the sharing of information and data about incidents is already part of your employer's **health and safety program**. If not, you may need to negotiate for this in your next **collective agreement**.

In some cases, your employer should even be required to pass along such information to AUPE. For example, this is the case under the AUPE Master Agreement with the Government of Alberta, in article 43.07.

You should find out how your fellow workers are expected to report their OHS concerns to your employer. In many cases, this is as simple as telling your direct supervisor and / or manager.

Report your OHS Concerns to government and to AUPE!

You and your co-workers have a right to file a complaint about your employer at any time to the provincial government, about an OHS concern at your worksite. This can be for an issue your JHSC is having difficulty resolving. AUPE also strongly recommends that you report any refusal of unsafe work, to both the provincial government and to AUPE. You can get support from a government OHS officer and from your union.

- Alberta Labour OHS Contact Centre At any time, you have a right to report workplace health and safety concern to a government OHS Officer. Report a concern online - <https://www.alberta.ca/file-complaint-online.aspx> Or call 1-866-415-8690 (Toll free in Alberta), 780-415-8690 (in Edmonton)
- AUPE Online Issue Reporting Form! Navigate to www.aupe.org > click on “Member Resources” > click on “Forms” > click on “OHS reporting form” <https://www.aupe.org/member-resources/forms/ohs-reporting-form> 1-800-232-7284 (Toll free in Alberta to speak with an AUPE Resource Centre agent, Monday to Friday, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm)

Scenario:

At the last committee meeting, Jasminder and the other worker representatives submitted a proposal. They persuaded the employer representatives to support their written **recommendation**. They believed the employer needed to take immediate action, to prevent further injuries caused by slipping on ice in the parking lot.

After the meeting, Jasminder and her fellow worker representatives talked about next steps. They considered getting AUPE’s staff OHS specialists involved. They also considered filing a complaint at the Alberta OHS Contact Centre. They agreed about what to do if the employer ignored their **recommendation** and the parking lot remained icy by Friday.

On Friday morning, Jasminder was disappointed to find the parking lot was as unsafe as ever. The employer had still not provided sand, marked the ice patches with warning signs, or emailed staff about precautions to take. She felt upset the employer wasn’t taking its OHS responsibilities seriously. And she was worried someone else would get hurt.

Jasminder used her smartphone to file a report to the staff OHS specialists at AUPE, using the union’s Online Issue Reporting Form. She then called the AUPE resource centre at 1-800-232-7284, and asked for her MSO to call her back. She knew that at morning break time, she’d go find her fellow worker representatives. She felt that together, they should each file their own anonymous complaint to the Alberta Labour OHS Contact Centre. She expected they’d each be on the phone for up to half an hour. But she also knew it was the right thing to do.

Investigate incidents

An **incident** is any undesired event that leads to or could have led to harm to workers. It's preferable to the dated term "accident," which implies an injury even is unforeseeable and therefore not preventable. An **incident investigation** is a process for determining what caused an incident, and finding ways of preventing it.

In the past, Alberta's *OHS Act* required that JHSCs be involved in the investigation of serious incidents. The law also required JHSCs to investigate potentially serious incidents. Those were near misses, as defined in the legislation.

With Bill 47 in 2020, the government cut out that requirement. This weakened your right to participate in workplace health and safety. It also made JHSCs less relevant and effective.

Ideally, your JHSC should still undertake incident investigations as part of the employer's **health and safety program**. Regardless, you and your co-workers should bargain for this right to be added to your **collective agreement**.

Today, some employers enable the JHSC to investigate incidents. In those cases, some workers with adequate training can participate in incident investigations. In other workplaces, the JHSC may review the employer's documentation, about incident investigations.

Regardless, you need to know more about how it works.

Some of the processes and procedures involved in investigations include:

- ✓ Recognizing what counts as an incident any why they must be investigated.
- ✓ Determining who should do the investigation and assembling the appropriate team
- ✓ How to preserve evidence and collect the facts.
- ✓ Processes for effective interviews of witnesses and other stakeholders.
- ✓ Identifying proximate and **root causes**.
- ✓ When to involve an OHS Officer or police, and how their involvement will affect the JHSC's investigation.
- ✓ What to recommended if the investigation reveals human error.
- ✓ Writing the investigation report and follow-up.

Some workers are afraid of the term ‘investigation.’ Keep in mind, investigating an OHS incident is not supposed to be about fault-finding or discipline.

Despite this, sometimes incident investigations can lead to workers being blamed. The **careless worker myth** makes it easier for employers to shift responsibility from themselves. They may try to blame workers for incidents. They do this by focusing on behaviour rather than on **root causes** and their own control of the workplace. Always remember, employers can foresee and remove or mitigate hazards that lead to incidents. It’s usually not human error that leads to incidents. Rather, it’s the presence of hazards and inadequate training that lead to most incidents.

Employers investigating incidents *should also* report back to the worker(s) who raised the concern or who were affected. This way, the worker(s) can determine if the issue has been resolved. Remember, the employer is obligated to resolve OHS issues in a timely manner. Yet, many employers fail to “close the loop.” They don’t notify the worker(s) who reported an incident or issue about the outcome of the incident investigation. The JHSC can play an important role in improving communication to affected workers.

Legislative requirement – *OHS Act*, Part 1, Sections 3(1)(f) and 3(4)(a), and Part 7, Section 33(5) and (6)



Investigating incidents is an advanced activity. Different employers approach investigations in a variety of ways. Most employers are likely to prefer employing specialists for incident investigations. This is especially true for certain types of incidents. In many cases, there are privacy concerns. Also, the employer may need to shield workers from trauma.

AUPE believes worker representatives of JHSCs should be involved in most incident investigations, subject to reasonable limitations.

You should participate in investigations of serious injuries and incidents at the worksite only if you’re trained and competent to do so. To participate effectively in incident investigations, you should seek further training. It’s worth specializing in this important health and safety activity.

To learn more about incident investigations, review suggestions from the CCOHS: <https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/investig.html>

To prepare to effectively participate in incident investigations, you may wish to take a post-secondary continuing education course:

- University of Alberta <https://ext.ualberta.ca/course/EXOS4579>
- University of Calgary <https://conted.ucalgary.ca/search/publicCourseSearchDetails.do?method=load&courseId=67163>

Melanie Neufeld



Melanie Neufeld works as an OHS Officer for the Government of Alberta, since 2008. Roughly 140 OHS Officers visit workplaces in Alberta to investigate unsafe or unhealthy working conditions. They ensure compliance with laws governing workplace safety. In 2022, Melanie also volunteered as a worker representative for her workplace's own joint health and safety committee. But, she experienced retaliation for speaking up. Her employer unfairly removed her from the committee. AUPE stood behind her, and she was re-instated to her role. Undeterred, Melanie continues the fight for healthy and safe workplaces for all workers. For Melanie, health and safety committees are essential for bringing management and workers together to discuss hazard controls and accountability.

12. Train and educate your fellow workers

Health and safety training plays an important role in reducing the number and severity of workplace injuries.

Worker representatives and the JHSC play an important role in raising awareness. You can educate your fellow workers about:

- 😊 Worker safety rights.
- 😊 Your employer's health and safety program.
- 😊 Specific hazard controls and safe work processes.

In other words, joint committees can help foster a positive **culture of safety** at your workplace. Training and education are key pathways to accomplishing this. Let's examine your employer's duties to both train members of JHSCs and to ensure workers are performing their duties safety. Then we'll look at options for OHS training.

Your employer's duty to train members of the Joint Health and Safety Committee

The law establishes an obligation on your employer to train you to fulfill your role as a member of a JHSC.

Specifically, the employer must ensure that members of the JHSC or a **health and safety representative** are trained in the:

1. Roles and responsibilities of co-chairs and regular members,
2. Obligations of work site parties, and,
3. Rights of workers.

Legislative Requirement, *OHS Code*, Part 13, Section 201.



This training should occur during normal work hours and be paid.

Remember, this booklet is not intended to meet any standard for training prescribed in legislation. The same is true for various OHS courses available from AUPE. They're not a substitute for training that employers must provide members of JHSCs.

As a worker representative, you're entitled to training by the employer in your role with the JHSC. So, if you've not yet been provided training, this is an issue that you and your fellow committee members should raise. Ask the decision-maker or employer representative when you will be trained by the employer in order to fulfill your role as a member of the JHSC. Request the training in writing. Include proposed deadlines for the employer, to both respond to the request and to fulfill its training duty.

As part of your regular meetings of the JHSC, it's best practice to also include ongoing self-education activities. You can:

- ✓ invite guest speakers,
- ✓ assign mini-presentations about specific OHS topics to each committee member, or
- ✓ take more extensive training as a group.

Your employer's duty to ensure workers are trained to do their jobs safely

Alberta's law requires your employer ensures that workers are adequately trained to perform their work in a healthy and safe manner.

Legislative Requirement – *OHS Act*, Part 1, Sections 3(1)(d) and 3(2)

The *OHS Code* has many additional requirements for training about specific hazards and OHS topics. You will find additional training requirements for:

- ✓ Confined spaces (Part 5, Section 46)
- ✓ First aid training (Part 11, Section 177)
- ✓ Safe lifting and handling of loads (Part 14, Section 211.1)
- ✓ Violence and harassment prevention (Part 27, sections 391 and 392.3)
- ✓ Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) (Part 29, Section 397)
- ✓ Training for medical sharps handling (Part 35, section 525.2 (5))
- ✓ Firefighting in mines (Part 36, Section 547)

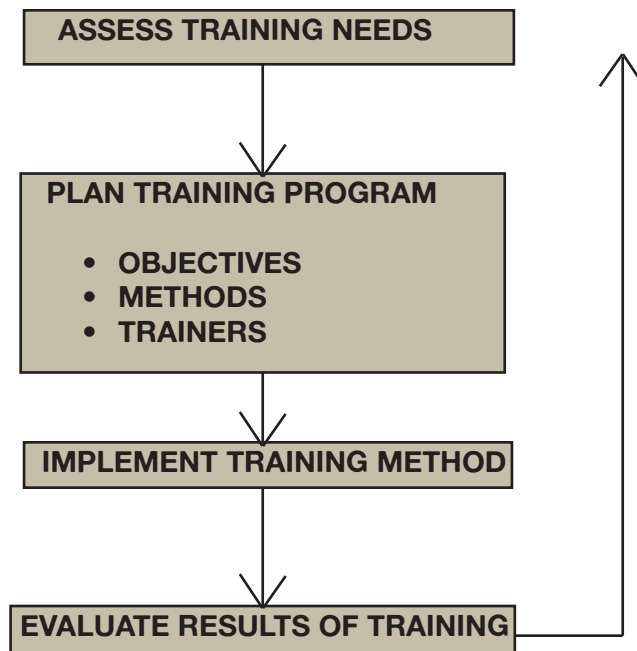
For the jobs of many workers, the employer can meet their legislated duty by providing:

- ✓ Orientation about the employer’s **health and safety program** as part of the onboarding process of newly hired recruits.
- ✓ Guidelines and training for the proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE) required for specific jobs.
- ✓ Regular updates and communication about specific hazards and their controls.

Some employers may choose to rely on the JHSC to develop safety awareness and training opportunities for all workers at a worksite. Regardless, your JHSC can always make a *recommendation* about safety training. Ideally, *worker representatives* should be involved in developing OHS training opportunities. Ongoing OHS education is a key component of fostering a *culture of safety* in your workplace.

Choosing effective training options

There are many options for your workplace safety training and injury prevention program. Choosing the best options begins with a needs assessment. You should follow the basic instructional design process:



Methods of training vary depending on resources, learners' needs, time, and specific objectives. You may wish to recommend a variety of methods. Doing so will help meet diverse learners' different needs. For example, e-learning by itself is less effective than a combination of e-learning and on-the-job training.

As a general rule, it's preferable to choose training methods that are convenient for the learner, and that include experiential components. Hands-on training and real-world simulations tend to be more effective than classroom-style lectures.

Sometimes training must address workers' skills to perform their jobs competently. This may happen when a hazard assessment or incident investigation determines that human error is a factor. It's also the case when you identify a need for safer operation of equipment.

Why AUPE advises you avoid behaviour-based training.

Safety training should emphasize removing and controlling hazards instead worker behaviour. Behaviour-based safety refers to a range of programs. They're all based on principles of behavioural psychology. They focus attention on workers' behaviours as the cause of most work-related injuries and illnesses. Advocates like the Workers Health and Safety Centre and the United Steelworkers have discredited behaviour-based approaches to safety. That's because behaviour-based training shifts a burden onto workers. It requires they change their behaviour. In effect, it accuses them of carelessness. This approach distracts from the more useful focus on the root cause of incidents. Just remember, employers control workplaces and have power to remove hazards.

To continue enhancing your knowledge of workplace safety, you and your fellow workers can:

- ✓ Read chapter 8 "Training and Injury Prevention Programs" (pages 164 – 185) in *Health and Safety in Canadian Workplaces*, by Bob Barnetson and Jason Foster, available as a free PDF download at:
<https://www.aupress.ca/books/120259-health-and-safety-in-canadian-workplaces/>
- ✓ Take workplace safety courses you employer offers or contracts externally.
- ✓ Take AUPE's OHS courses. Check the schedule of upcoming courses, or register yourself online now at <https://www.aupe.org/training> or request support from registrar@aupe.org
- ✓ Request a lunch'n'learn session on an OHS topic from one of AUPE's staff OHS specialists. Contact them at ohs.staff@aupe.org with your request or proposal.
- ✓ Pursue additional education available from the continuing education departments of post-secondary institutions across Canada.

Take a single course or earn an entire certificate in OHS from the University of Alberta

If you wish to “level up” your knowledge and skills related to workplace safety, or possibly even pursue a career as an OHS practitioner, you may be interested in pursuing a Certificate or a Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety.

Your union’s Education Department provides AUPE members with a unique opportunity to use hours accumulated in the union’s education programming towards studies at the University of Alberta.

Courses are available online and in-person on a wide variety of OHS topics. For more information, consult:

- <https://www.aupe.org/training/university-credit-transfer> and
- <https://ext.ualberta.ca/enroll/occupational-health-safety-certificate>

13. Evaluate your employer's OHS Program and Continuously Improve it

Measuring the effectiveness of health and safety systems is a challenge for the JHSC.

A wide variety of factors, issues, and specific program elements can be involved. They depend largely on both your industry and the employer's specific **health and safety program**. These factors include understanding and evaluating your organization's unique culture of safety.

Measuring program success starts with taking stock. It can include data analysis, management principles, and financial impacts. The goal of continuous improvement should be to reduce rates and severity of workplace injury and illness. Injury rates are the ultimate measure of whether a program is working or not.

AUPE recommends using a neutral and scientific approach to begin evaluation. The Institute for Work and Health in Ontario has designed measures of vulnerability. They can be a helpful starting point for many JHSCs trying to measure program effectiveness.

Try this!

The OHS Vulnerability Measure assesses how vulnerable workers are to hazards. Researchers and scientists at the Institute for Work and Health (IWH) created this survey to help workers and organizations improve workplace health and safety.

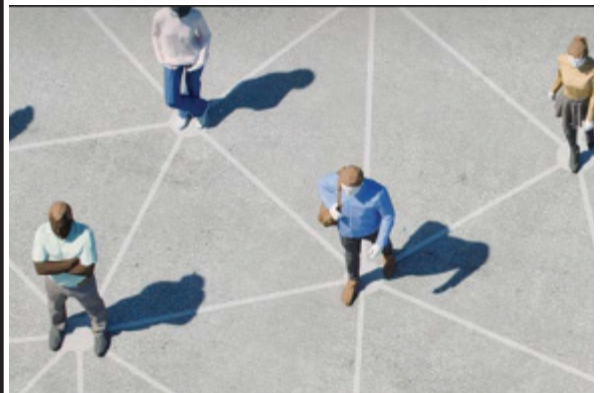


<https://tinyurl.com/IWH-Survey>

For more information about IWH and how its programs and research can help you evaluate your employer's OHS program, navigate to:



<https://www.iwh.on.ca/>



Control measures can be evaluated in several different ways. What to evaluate depends on the outcome of the initiative. Your JHSC may wish to consider evaluating:

- ✓ Frequency and clarity of communication about hazards and controls.
- ✓ Proportion of hazard assessments that involved the affected worker and that were updated in a specified period.
- ✓ Specific organizational changes such as management practices that may contribute to employee well-being.
- ✓ Whether the employer implements the actions in formal recommendations, submitted by the JHSC.
- ✓ Level of awareness of staff about OHS resources, policies, and the employer's health and safety program.
- ✓ Satisfaction and well-being at work.
- ✓ Staff absenteeism and use of sick leave.
- ✓ Number of OHS complaints, concerns, and incidents.

Use caution with incentive programs

Some employers introduce programs to incentivize reduced rates of injury in the workplace. In these schemes, the employer rewards staff with some kind of a bonus when reported incidents decrease. While the intent may be to reduce workplace injuries, the reality is often different. These programs instead encourage workers to avoid reporting incidents to obtain the bonus. These programs run counter to the logic of the internal responsibility system.

That system depends on all worksite parties to report and then address OHS concerns. So, measuring the number, severity and type of reported incidents is appropriate – but trying to manipulate reporting is not



Some workplaces are regulated by an industry safety association. Employers in a given industry form these are organizations. They deliver safety services, and advocate on behalf of the employers on safety issues. They often deliver training and establish regulations. Some have even been authorized to conduct workplace safety audits. Two examples in Alberta include the Continuing Care Safety Association and the Alberta Safety Council.

Workplace safety audits differ from inspections. Audits do not identify hazards or non-compliance with regulations. Instead, audits assess whether a workplace has an appropriate safety system in place to deal with safety matters. They evaluate:

- ✓ the quality of communications,
- ✓ the presence of training and safety manuals, and
- ✓ whether appropriate paperwork is complete

Employers prefer audits to inspections by **OHS Officers**. That's because audits are educative in nature. They don't carry a possibility of an order, administrative ticket, or prosecution.

Your JHSC should make **recommendations** that help the employer to evaluate and improve its health and safety program.

Some of the elements you should review include:

- ✓ Emergency preparation plan.
- ✓ Violence prevention program.
- ✓ Specific components of the health and safety program.
- ✓ Reviewing safety training the employer offers.
- ✓ Specific OHS policies and safe work procedures.

It's best practice to schedule review of these items. Do evaluation either as a standing item on all JHSC meeting agendas, or schedule an annual review. Doing evaluation on a standing basis allows for continuous improvement and avoids a bottleneck. Prioritize focusing your review on issues that are most urgent.

Ask fellow AUPE members and other **worker representatives** to share knowledge with you. Learn about others' JHSC activities and experiences about improving an employers' safety program. Reach out to your Local OHS Liaison and communicate with the standing OHS Committee. You can also seek additional training in program evaluation.

14. Beyond joint committees: Bargaining for Safety and Organizing for Power

Being an effective advocate for workplace safety includes recognizing key moments. This includes situations in which the JHSC is no longer a sufficient means for addressing a workplace health and safety concern.

It's possible your employer will fail to fulfill its duties under OHS legislation. Or the employer may persist in ignoring a workplace hazard. Some employers doggedly refuse to implement the most well-reasoned of committee **recommendations**.

When this happens, worker representatives and co-chairs can turn to AUPE's OHS specialists for support. Together, we can escalate your OHS concern in a number of ways.

Ask a Steward or your Membership Services officer file a grievance

One way to escalate your OHS issue is to file a **grievance**. Union stewards can file **grievances**.

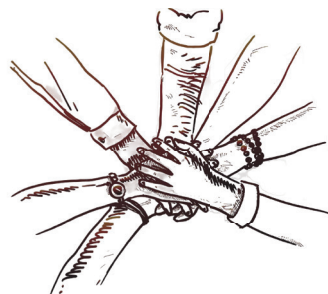
A union steward is the traditional title given to some union members who represent their union. A steward is a worker who is nominated and trained to act as a labour relations representative, on behalf of other members.

Union stewards can file a grievance, using procedures in a collective agreement to compel the employer to follow the rules.

In short, a grievance is a formal complaint that alleges the employer has violated the collective agreement. In some cases, this may include taking the case to a labour arbitration hearing. At such a hearing, an arbitrator can instruct the employer to fix a problem.

You can also request support from your Membership Services Officer to file a grievance. To get in touch with your Membership Services Officer, call 1-800-232-7284 and speak with AUPE's Resource Centre from Monday to Friday, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm.

AUPE encourages all worker representatives and committee co-chairs to also become union **stewards**.



To become an AUPE union steward, you should:

- ✓ Request a nomination, by your Local or Chapter.
- ✓ Complete AUPE's union steward training. That means taking specific courses, including:
 - o Introduction to Your Union*
 - o Basic Conflict Management*
 - o Contract Interpretation*
 - o Foundations for Union Stewards*

See the schedule of upcoming courses here: <https://www.aupe.org/training/courses>

- ✓ Complete your homework assignment and a short mentorship together with your Membership Services Officer.

The nomination form for becoming a steward is available on AUPE's website:



Navigate to www.aupe.org > Member Resources > Forms > “Become a Union Steward Package; Union Steward Nomination Form”

<https://www.aupe.org/member-resources/forms>

(Click on the Become a Union Steward Nomination Form button midway down the page under Documents and Forms for Officers and Activists)

Bargain for better safety rights

It's important to bargain for improved language in your collective agreement about workplace health and safety.

Badly and long-awaited improvements in 2017 caught Alberta's safety laws up to the norm found throughout the rest of Canada. But then, Bill 47 in 2020 stripped away many of your best workplace safety protections. Bill 47 severely weakened the effectiveness of joint health and safety committees.

Thankfully, your collective agreement can establish rights and entitlements that exceed the minimum requirements in legislation.

Also keep in mind, your collective agreement is important for educating your co-workers. Don't be shy about adding to your collective agreement the rights that exist in legislation. This makes those existing rights more visible to the workers covered.

If your collective agreement doesn't already have language that establishes enhanced safety, you should collaborate with others to make this happen. This including bargaining for better rights and duties of the joint health and safety committee. Speak with the representatives of your AUPE Negotiating Team and the elected Executive members of your Chapter.

Include health and safety questions in your bargaining surveys and in demand-setting meetings.

Then, prepare to “bargain for safety” with your employer.

Make sure that for your next round of collective bargaining, your unit's in-going proposal includes the latest health and safety language. Ideally, your bargaining unit should only vote “yes” to ratify a tentative agreement that achieves the following:

- 😊 Expand the duties and responsibilities of the JHSC, so that it is required to:
 - o Have worker representatives that can only be duly elected by workers or appointed by AUPE, and not chosen by management.
 - o Inspect the work site at regular intervals.
 - o Develop and promote measures that protect the health and safety of people at the work site.
 - o Develop and promote programs for the education, training and information of workers, concerning health and safety at the worksite.
 - o Be involved in all steps of the process for a refusal of unsafe work. This includes supporting the worker who refuses dangerous work. This is similar to requirements under Alberta's *OHS Act* that was in effect from 2017-2020.
 - o Participate in investigations of incidents and serious injuries.
 - o Maintain written records for at least two years.

- 😊 Establish a maximum time limit by which the employer must either implement or respond to a committee recommendation. It's crucial to include language specifying what an employer must do to respond and to your joint committee's **recommendations**. That's because Alberta's OHS law doesn't impose any requirements – not even for the employer to report back about action it may take!

- 😊 Enhance workers' right to refuse by describing the entire process for a refusal of unsafe work. Replace unhelpful terms like “undue hazard” or “imminent danger” that narrow your right to refuse. Use expansive terms, like “any dangerous condition, including risks that may pose a minor or long-term threat to the health and safety of a person.”

- 😊 Employer to pay for committee-specific training. The JHSC training should be subject to a needs assessment, input, or determination by committee members.

- 😊 Right to grieve for resolution of an OHS concern / remove any exclusion of using grievances for OHS issues.

- 😊 Requirement to share valuable workplace safety information with your union. This means sending data about workplace incidents directly to AUPE.

For a more detailed list of items to include when bargaining for safety, you should take AUPE's course *OHS for Union Activists*.

To learn more about negotiating, take AUPE's course *Bargaining Basics*.

Access the schedule of available courses and register at <https://www.aupe.org/training/courses>.

Organize for power

In the past, some unions opposed expanding the role of joint health and safety committees. They felt these committees were a sneaky way for employers to evade government oversight. They worried workplace committees enabled government to skip hiring more workplace safety inspectors. Many believe that hiring more **OHS Officers** could better enforce existing safety rules.

Some workers may become frustrated with the bureaucracy and legalistic processes of joint health and safety committees.

Some employers may at times use a joint health and safety committee to stall. They attempt to delay making real changes that protect workers' safety. Employers do this because of costs, time, and interruptions to work.

Alberta's government passed Bill 47 in 2020, relaxing requirements on employers about joint committees. This prompted one professor of labour relations to write:

“As an OHS committee member, I wonder why I would bother to participate in such a hollow ineffective system? It would be a much better use of my time to organize workers to do their own inspections and then orchestrate mass work refusals.”

If these sentiments reflect your situation, then maybe it's time to "organize for power." There are several alternatives you can choose from:

- 😊 Have one-to-one conversations about health and safety.
Getting other workers involved in safety issues starts with building relationships and trust. The first and most important action is to hold one-to-one meetings. The goal is to ask people to take an action and work together as a group. To learn how, you should read "Secrets of a Successful Organizer." It's available from Labor Notes:



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

- 😊 Take workplace actions.
Through workplace actions, you and your co-workers flex your collective muscles and show your employer you have power. **Direct action** helps you check which members are already mobilized and identify new supporters. You also show the employer your OHS concern is an issue for everybody. Start small, with symbolic actions – use symbols like t-shirts, rolling up a pant leg, or clicking your pen. Over time, your fellow workers gain courage for bigger and more effective actions in the future. This includes actions like a "march on the boss," an information picket, or even going on strike.

- 😊 Take AUPE's course *Workplace Power*.
Your union offers a two-day course that explains how to build capacity for direct action, to get what you need and deserve at work. See the training schedule and register now at:



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

"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

Lobby government for laws that work for workers

As a union member, you should always advocate for broader changes to benefit all workers. This includes improvements to health and safety law, the operation of the OHS system, and to workers' compensation.

Generally, workers and their unions demand that the government:

- Increase the number of provincial **OHS Officers**, and step up proactive inspection levels. That means we demand the government go beyond primarily complaint-driven enforcement, and do more proactive enforcement.
- Introduce much stricter and mandatory consequences for violations. That includes enforcing **Westray provisions** and prosecuting employers for criminal negligence.
- Improve worker-focused safety education. That includes substantial funding for independent training of worker representatives of joint safety committees.
- It's worth becoming more familiar with the specific proposals that would improve OHS protections for Alberta's workers.

Here are two places to get started:

1. Read the thirteen recommendations the Parkland Institute made in its 2018 report, "Safer by Design":



https://www.parklandinstitute.ca/safer_by_design

2. Read the 17 recommendations AUPE made in its August 2019 submission to the UCP's government's brief public consultation prior to introducing Bill 47:



<https://tinyurl.com/4fdfjt8j>

Once you're familiar with specific recommendations on how the government should improve the system – or when you've developed your own! – you can advocate for them as you would for any other legislative change. You can educate other workers, phone your Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), organize a rally or information picket, and so on.

15. Glossary of key terms

Accident – an outdated term for an event that has led to some degree of harm. Use the term “incident” instead.

Administrative controls – These are changes to the way people work, such as procedures, employee training, and warning signs.

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) – A federal government agency established in 1978 to promote the total well-being of workers in Canada. It provides information, training, education, and workplace safety solutions.

Co-chair – One of two chairpersons who preside together over a JHSC. One represents the employer; the other is chosen by worker representatives.

Collective agreement – A written contract between an employer and a union that outlines many terms and conditions of employment for workers in a bargaining unit.

Collective bargaining – A process by which a group of workers (referred to as a bargaining unit and represented by a union), negotiates with their employer to determine the terms of their employment, including pay, benefits, hours, leave, workplace health and safety, and more.

Control – Hazard control refers to implementing corrective measures that eliminate (remove) or mitigate (reduce) the effect of a hazard.

Culture of safety – The everyday attitudes, values, norms and beliefs that leaders and workers share about risk and safety.

Direct action – The use of activities or a form of economic power by a group of workers to apply pressure on a target like a decision-maker, employer or government.

Elimination – Physically removing a hazard from the workplace or work process is the most effective hazard control.

Engineering control – This is the third most effective means of controlling hazards. It’s a method that does not eliminate hazards, but rather isolates people from hazards.

Grievance – A formal complaint against management by one or more employees or by a union, alleging the employer violated rules in the collective agreement. Procedures for handling the grievance are usually defined in the collective agreement.

Hazard – Anything that might harm, damage, or adversely affect any person or thing under certain conditions at work. It can be an object, process, context, person or set of circumstances which has the potential to cause injury or illness.

Hazard identification – A process and practice of recognizing, prioritizing, and eliminating or mitigating workplace hazards. Also known by the abbreviations “HRAC” or “HIAC.”

Health and safety program – A coordinated system of procedures, processes, and other measures that employers are legally required to establish, for the promotion and improvement of occupational health and safety. Often simply called the “OHS Program.”

Health and safety representative – An individual who works to promote the awareness and interest in health and safety, and takes on many of the roles of a JHSC when the employer doesn’t have a committee at a particular worksite.

Hierarchy of controls – A system used in industry to prioritize possible interventions aimed at eliminating or minimizing exposure to hazards in the workplace.

Incident – Any undesired event that leads to or could have led to harm to workers. It’s preferable to the dated term “accident” which implies an injury even is unforeseeable and therefore not preventable.

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

Internal responsibility system – A system of accountability for occupational health and safety based on cooperation between an employer and the workers it employs.

Joint health and safety committee – A group of employer representatives and worker representatives who address health and safety concerns.

Management rights – The right of an employer to manage and direct business operations bound only by limits set out in law and contract.

Minutes – Notes taken during a meeting that record meaningful discussions, decisions, and key takeaways. They’re meant to provide an accurate record of what happened in the meeting.

Near miss – An event or hazard that could have, but did not, lead to harm to workers.

Negotiating team – A group of elected AUPE members who together with a staff negotiator, set a bargaining proposal and negotiate collectively with an employer for a new collective agreement. They’re also sometimes called ‘bargaining committees.’

Occupational disease – An illness or health condition that arises primarily due to exposure to a hazardous substance or condition in the workplace. Work-related disease often develops over time and as a result of repeated exposures.

Occupational exposure limit – A regulatory or recommended maximum concentration of an airborne hazardous substance in a workplace, that is considered “safe” for a majority of workers over a specified period of time (usually an eight-hour workday or 40-hour workweek).

Occupational Health and Safety Act – The law in Alberta that since in 1976 creates a modern and comprehensive framework meant to protect the safety, health, and well-being of workers across various industries and worksites under provincial jurisdiction. The current version is available from the Kings’ Printer, navigate to <https://www.alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code>.

OHS Issue Reporting Form – AUPE offers members an online form to notify OHS staff specialists about unresolved workplace safety and health concerns. Any member can fill out the form: <https://www.aupe.org/member-resources/forms/ohs-reporting-form>.

OHS Officer – A provincial employee who performs government safety duties, like investigating whether worksites are following the laws and rules governing workplace safety.

Order – A written command given by an OHS Officer (or another authorized government representative or judge) under Alberta’s OHS laws to an employer, to take measures or actions within a specified time limit.

Personal protective equipment – Supplies, clothing or equipment worn or used by workers to reduce risks of exposure to hazards in the workplace. It’s the least effective type of control.

Quorum – The minimum number of members of a joint health and safety committee that must be present at any of its meetings to make the proceedings of that meeting valid.

Reasonably practicable – A legal term used by the employing class to limit or qualify the measures employers must take in the protection of workers’ health and safety. Criteria that can be taken into consideration include feasibility, reasonableness of the effort, time, costs, practice, etc.

Recommendation – A written statement summarizing both a workplace health and safety issue and a proposed solution, from the joint health and safety committee (JHSC) to the employer. Making recommendations is one of the main purposes of the joint committee.

Regular meeting – A meeting of a Joint Health and Safety Committee that was previous scheduled and anticipated by the committee members. It’s contrasted with a “Special meeting.”

Right to participate – Workers’ safety right to engage in workplace health and safety activities (oftentimes through a Joint Health and Safety Committee) under the internal responsibility system. This right includes reporting health and safety concerns and suggesting actions to make the workplace safer.

Right to know – Workers’ safety right to be informed by the employer about workplace hazards and protections under the internal responsibility system.

Right to refuse – Workers’ safety right to decline to undertake unsafe work under the internal responsibility system.

Root cause – The ultimate or “real” cause of an injury incident or near miss. It underlies “proximate causes,” which are events immediately responsible for the injury.

Safety Data Sheet (SDS) – A document that lists information relating to OHS for workplace use of a hazardous substance or chemical mixture. In Canada, the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) establishes requirements for SDSs.

Special meeting – A meeting of a Joint Health and Safety Committee that is convened at the request of an OHS Officer or at the request of a committee member to deal with concerns at the work site. It’s contrasted with a previously-scheduled “regular meeting.”

Substitution – This is the second most effective hazard control. It involves replacing something that produces a hazard with something that produces a lesser hazard.

Steward – A worker in an organization who represents and defends the interests of their fellow workers, as an official representative of their union. Also called “shop stewards” or “union stewards.” They undertake basic labour relations functions, like filing grievances and worker-to-worker organizing.

Terms of reference – A written document that defines the purpose and structure and processes of a Joint Health and Safety Committee. It’s required of your employer by law.

Union Safety Advantage – The effect of unions that make workplaces safer, because of collective agreements, member education, protection from employer retaliation, independent experts, and more effective joint health and safety committees.

Westray provisions – Amendments made by Bill C-45 in 2004 to Canada’s Criminal Code, named after a 1992 mining disaster, to improve rules about criminal liability on corporations for workplace deaths and injuries.

Worker representative – An individual worker (who is not associated with management) designated as a safety representative, to help the employer address health and safety concerns through a joint health and safety committee (JHSC).

Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) – First established in 1988 and significantly updated in 2015, WHMIS is Canada’s national workplace hazard communication standard. It involves labelling of controlled products and hazards, safety data sheets (SDSs), and worker education.

16. Resources

Hazard Assessment Templates



Here are examples of templates you can use for hazard assessment and control reporting.

In this folder, we've compiled a variety of sample forms and templates for hazard assessments.

<https://rb.gy/5bm4pn>

You may download and freely use any of these forms. You may wish to customize them to your worksite.

Hazard assessment and control report (template)

This is one example of a hazard assessment and control form. If you choose to use this template, make sure you customize it to your work and work site.

Job/position/work type:			Date of assessment:
Assessment performed by: (names)			Reviewed/revised:
Tasks <i>(List all tasks/activities of the job/position)</i>	Hazards <i>(List all existing and potential health and safety hazards related to the identified tasks)</i>	Controls <i>(List the controls for each hazard: elimination, engineering, administrative, personal protective equipment or a combination thereof)</i>	Date implemented
		Elimination: Engineering: Administrative: PPE:	
		Elimination: Engineering: Administrative: PPE:	
		Elimination: Engineering: Administrative: PPE:	
		Elimination: Engineering: Administrative: PPE:	

This form is for example purposes only. Completing this form alone will not necessarily put you in compliance with the legislation. It is important and necessary that you customize this document to meet the unique circumstances of your work site. Further, it is essential that this document is not only completed, but is used, communicated and implemented in accordance with the legislation. Neither the Crown, its agents, employees or contractors, will be liable to you for any damages, direct or indirect, arising out of your use of this form.

Site-specific hazard assessment (template)

This is one example of a site-specific hazard assessment. **If you choose to use this template, here's how:**

- Customize the checklist (over) for your work and work site. Customize any other sections as needed.
- Use the checklist as a prompt when looking for new or situational hazards not addressed in your formal hazard assessment and control report, or for required controls that are not in place.
- Record uncontrolled hazards and actions taken below.
- Review the completed form with all workers **before work starts**, and document the review on the next page.

Eliminate or control all hazards before work starts.

Employer name:

Date:

Work site location:

Work activities:

Hazards and actions *List one hazard per row. Add or delete rows as needed.*

Hazard	Action(s) taken
<i>List any uncontrolled hazards.</i>	<i>Describe appropriate actions taken before work started. For example, how you eliminated or controlled a hazard; or if you stopped one or more work activities and referred a hazard to management for formal assessment. (Inform management about all new hazards.)</i>

Is there anything else to report? *Add or delete bullets as needed. Examples include:*

- *<A suggestion for improvement.>*
- *<A recommendation to update the formal hazard assessment and control report.>*

Site checklist *Customize the sample prompts below to your work and work site. Add or delete rows as needed.*

Environmental	General site hazards	Controls	Other

Site-specific hazard assessment template

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Sample Agenda for JHSC Meetings

Agenda Item	Description
1. Welcome, introductions, attendance	Welcome new members and guests, take attendance.
2. Approval of agenda	Review agenda items and allow opportunity for additions or changes.
3. Safety self-education moment	2 – 3 minute spotlight on a health, safety, or wellness topic prepared in advance by one of the members.
4. Unfinished / tabled business	Review items carried forward from the previous meeting and monitor actions assigned to committee members.
5. New Business	New health, safety, and wellness items to be discussed.
6. Standing items, such as:	Items like recommendations, regular items that occur at all meetings, or activities not included elsewhere in the agenda.
6.1 Worksite inspections.	Review documentation from worksite inspections completed since the last meeting. Identify corrective actions and make one or more recommendations.
6.2 Review of incident reports.	Discuss incidents that arose since the last meeting. Make one or more recommendations.
6.3 Review of investigations into potentially serious incidents and near misses.	Discuss preventative measures for serious incidents and near misses that arose since the last meeting. Make one or more recommendations.
6.4 Review and update of a policy, plan, or component of the employer’s health and safety program.	Build into your regular meetings time for continuous improvement of the health and safety program, emergency response plan, JHSC terms of reference, and so on.
6.5 Health, safety, and wellness consultation and promotion, and education opportunities.	Focus time every meeting on awareness-raising activities and training initiatives targeted to all workers at the employer’s worksite, about OHS.
7. Additional items.	
8. Date of next meeting and adjournment.	Date, time and location of next meeting. Try to establish the schedule for regular meetings a year in advance.

Sample Meeting Minutes

Meeting Minutes

Employer / Organization Name
Occupational Health and Safety Committee and Work Location

Date: April 26, 2024		Time: 10:30 am – 12 pm
Meeting chaired by:	John Doe, Worker Co-chair	
Attendees:	List the names of the attendees.	
Absence:	List names of committee members who were absent without sending regrets.	
Documents:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. List all documents one by one that were used at the meeting. 2. Use the document title and corresponding electronic file name, if they differ. 3. For example: 4. Terms of reference, dated Jan 3, 2024, file name TOR-Advanced-ED_OHS.docx 	
No.	Topic:	Highlights:
1	Welcome / Introductions	Round table introductions were made.
2	Agenda	Approved as tabled.
3		<p>Handout: Powerpoint slides with overview of OHS program, file name Employer_OHS-Program-2023-2025.ppt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane Doe from Corporate Human Resources provided committee with summary of proposed revisions. Key changes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Increased responsibility of department manager for safety component of new staff orientations. o Revised Emergency Preparedness procedure. o Addition of mandatory training module for formal workplace inspections. • Committee wants to recommend same presentation be given to Executive.

<p>4</p>	<p>Review and update last Terms of Reference</p>	<p>Reference document: Terms of reference, dated Jan 3, 2024. Handout: Membership list.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed revisions tabled for feedback. Thanks to Lorelei Doe and sub-committee members for preparing draft. • Key change requests included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 21-day limit in procedure for executive reply to written recommendations. o Worker co-chair may designate a worker representative to participate in incident investigations, as long as that person has completed incident investigation training and except those incidents determined by corporate human resources to be sensitive / risk of trauma. • Revised draft to be circulated to committee for final review. Comments to be emailed to Raani by May 10. • Finalized updated TOR to be presented to executive team this summer. Date TBD. • Vacant committee positions identified. Connie from HR is to identify employer representatives.
<p>5</p>	<p>Committee training requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to choose training standard for designated incident investigators. • June presented this month’s OHS Ed Moment, she presented on “History of Day of Mourning.” All committee members invited to this Sunday’s ceremony at union head office.

6	Discussion of draft OHS Work Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft 2024-25 work plan discussed. Four OHS Program requirements not yet updated or met identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Noise management and hearing protection o Compliance with anticipated changes to Part 27 violence and harassment in <i>OHS Code</i>. Possible staff awareness campaign, TBD. o Training more incident investigators with focus on proactive control procedures. o Review of Director-approved allowances for alternate equipment, refer to maintenance. • Volunteers requested to examine each of four areas and write draft scope of work plan and propose timeline.
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ACTION ITEMS				
NO.	ACTION ITEM	ACCOUNTABLE	INFORMATION/ SUPPORT	TARGET DATE
1	Update and circulate revised draft of Terms of Reference	Raani		MAY 3, 2024
2	Email comments to Raani about revised Terms of Reference.	All	Please review changes and entire TOR. Send further change requests as “reply all” email.	MAY 17, 2024
3	Research and propose shortlist of three best options for incident investigation training.	Frank	JASMINDER AND COREY	MAY 30, 2024
4	Write draft scope of work plan for noise management.	Raani	To contact Mike and maintenance and grounds supervisors.	MAY 30, 2024

5	Write draft scope of work plan for Part 27 violence compliance.	John	*This item may be delayed until we have documentation from government review panel.	MAY 30, 2024
6	Write draft scope of work plan for updates to incident investigation procedure.	Frank		MAY 30, 2024
7	Write draft scope of work plan for a committee review of Director-approved allowances	Mark	Jane to provide list of Alberta Labour-approved allowance by April 30.	MAY 30, 2024
8	Send agenda items or OHS concerns brought to you to Mark.	All		MAY 22, 2024
Next meeting- Thurs., May 30, 2024, to be chaired by Mark, employer co-chair.				

Sample Written Recommendation

Date: (Month, Day, Year)

Attention: (Name of senior manager or executive, job title)

(Name of Employer / Organization)

(Address of applicable worksite)

Recommendation number: (insert code used by JHSC for record keeping, make sure same code appears in meeting minutes).

The joint health and safety committee at (insert work location) identified [describe the action, condition, hazard, or danger], which poses a significant risk to the health and safety of workers involved.

Left unaddressed, this hazard could result in (describe likelihood of negative outcome and describe the risk to workers and potential losses to the employer).

Pursuant to [insert sections] of Alberta's *OHS Act* and sections [insert sections] of the *OHS Code*, the employer should be aware of the following legislated obligations, including:

- General duty to ensure as far as **reasonably practicable** the health, safety and welfare of workers employed.
- (list the other relevant passages or legislated duties on the employer).

After research and discussion of various alternatives, the members of the JHSC recommend that you:

- Describe the action you recommend the employer should authorize be taken in a short phrase. **Boldface the action**, so that it stands out. Try writing the recommendation using a verb in the imperative. That way, it's like a to do list and the reader knows what action to authorize. State who should implement the action. Provide some detail describing the action, if required.

Our rationale for this solution is that:

- Give reasons why this measure is effective.
- You may also include reasons why other options are less desirable. Your recommendation may look stronger if you contrast it to one or more options that carry more risk or that would fail to reduce the possibility of loss.

We anticipate that our recommendation will result in [state the short term outcome and long-term benefits].



Worker Rep nd Co-Chair Handbook

For Effective Joint Health
and Safety Committees

AUPEducation

1 800 232 7284
AUPE.ORG/TRAINING