

What business owners need to know about workplace safety



Workplace safety makes good business sense.

Research shows that safe businesses are more profitable. Injuries cost money. You lose productivity. You may need to replace workers or pay overtime. You may have to pay fines. Your insurance premiums may go up. All these costs affect your bottom line.

Most importantly, though, workplace injuries hurt people. Workplace injuries hurt families.

Your duties under the Act

As an employer, you have a duty to ensure the health and safety of everyone at or near your workplace.

Here are the main things that you must do to meet your obligations under the Act:

- Maintain your equipment
- Maintain your business premises
- Train, instruct, and supervise your workers
- Make proper equipment and safety gear available to your workers. Make sure these are used by your workers – and used appropriately
- Tell every worker about any health and safety hazards in the workplace
- Assess your workplace for hazards and address each hazard you identify
- Develop a process for investigating each injury or near miss that occurs in your workplace
- Tell every worker about their rights:
 1. the right to refuse unsafe work
 2. the right to know of any hazards in the workplace
 3. the right to participate – to identify and resolve issues
- Assure every worker that if they exercise these rights you will not punish them – for helping to create a safe workplace (It would be better to thank them)
- Post a copy of the Occupational Health and Safety Act where workers can find it easily
- Post the telephone number of the OHS office for your workers – 1-800-9LABOUR, 1-800-952-2687

Plus, a business of **5 or more** must also:

- Make sure that your workers choose a Health and Safety representative – someone who is not a manager or owner
- Develop a written OHS policy and review it each year
- Sign and post your OHS policy where workers can find it easily
- Make available at your workplace any regulations that apply to the type of work being done

Plus, a business of **20 or more** must also:

- Establish a Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee – a group of workers who meet regularly to discuss workplace safety
- Make sure that the committee meets each month
- Cooperate with the committee to develop and implement a safety program
- Make sure that the committee develops written rules of procedure

Your duty to report serious injuries

You must notify the Department of Labour and Advanced Education Occupational Health and Safety division whenever a serious injury happens at your workplace. Call or send the notice in writing within the following deadlines:



- within 24 hours of a death from any cause
- within 24 hours of an injury that might prove fatal, for example, if someone is in critical condition in hospital
- within 24 hours of an accidental explosion – with or without an injury
- within 7 days if a fire or accident caused a serious injury – an injury that needs treatment by a doctor or paramedic

Phone: 1-800-952-2687 or 1-800-9LABOUR

Fax: 902-424-5640

Mail: 5151 Terminal Road, P.O. Box 697, Halifax,
NS B3J 2T8

Email: OHSDIVISION@gov.ns.ca

If you are registered with the WCB you must also report the injury to the WCB within 5 days.

Regulations that you must know and apply

The following regulations apply to most workplaces in Nova Scotia:

- WHMIS – Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System Regulations:
 - applies to workplaces with or near controlled products – chemicals, explosives, or poisons
- First Aid Regulations:
 - every workplace must have on site someone certified in first aid
 - every workplace must have a first aid kit
- Workplace Health and Safety Regulations
- Violence in the Workplace Regulations
- Occupational Safety General Regulations

You must also know and apply any regulations that apply to the type of work being done. For example:

- construction businesses must follow the Fall Protection and Scaffolding provisions in the Workplace Health and Safety Regulations
- businesses that do blasting must follow the Blasting Safety Regulations

This brochure is intended to help you understand the primary health and safety laws that apply to your business. Please consult the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and regulations for the full set of laws that may apply to your workplace.

Find the Act at

http://nslegislature.ca/legc/statutes/occph_s.htm

Find the regulations at

novascotia.ca/lae/healthandsafety/pubs.asp