



WCB Safety Certified

Element Criteria

and

Sample Questions

The Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia (WCB) is committed to the reduction of workplace injury and illness in Nova Scotia. The WCB encourages all workplace parties, including employers, owners, managers, workers, unions, contractors and suppliers to take an active part in the prevention of workplace injuries and illnesses.

Implementing a health and safety management system is a recognized way to effectively manage risk and reduce injury and illness. Everyone in the workplace can – and should – participate in recommending, developing and implementing appropriate systems and processes; but, ultimately, business owners, employers and management must make the commitment to continuously work toward a healthy and safe workplace.

The Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia (WCB) encourages employers to demonstrate leadership and commitment to workplace health and safety by becoming **WCB Safety Certified**.

A **WCB Safety Certified** accreditation is issued to companies who have passed an audit of their health and safety management system. The audits are conducted by audit providers approved by the WCB to conduct **WCB Safety Certified** audits.

A list of approved audit providers is available on the WCB website.

When an organization decides that being **WCB Safety Certified** would be beneficial, it is recommended that the organization contact a WCB-approved audit provider to assist in preparing for the audit as early in the process as possible.

This document outlines the 22 elements that a WCB-approved audit provider is required to audit in order to issue the **WCB Safety Certified** accreditation. In addition, sample questions that could be considered when reviewing a health and safety management system have been provided. Please note that an audit provider may ask different questions when conducting a **WCB Safety Certified** audit. The questions included in this document are intended simply as a guide.

ELEMENT 1: Occupational Health and Safety Policy

Element 1 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit evaluates whether the OHS Policy includes the following:

- **Commitment:** Verification that the employer's occupational health and safety policy contains one or more statements setting out the employer's commitment to occupational health and safety.
- **Cooperation:** Verification that the employer's occupational health and safety policy contains one or more statement setting out the employers commitment to cooperate with employees in the pursuit of occupational health and safety. Policy statements to the effect that employees will cooperate in health and safety – while good statements – are not equivalent and shall not be granted points towards this element.
- **Responsibility:** Verification that the employer's occupational health and safety policy contains one or more statements setting out in general terms appropriate for an overall policy the responsibilities of the employer, supervisors and other employees to occupational health and safety.

Sample Questions for Element 1:

- *Does the Policy identify the employer's commitment to health and safety?*
- *Does the Policy contain one or more statements setting out the employer's commitment to cooperate with employees in the pursuit of occupational health and safety?*
- *Does the Policy have statements that indicate employer, supervisors' and employees' occupational health and safety responsibilities?*
- *Are employees aware of the Occupational Health and Safety Policy?*
- *Is the Policy posted?*
- *Is the Policy reviewed yearly by organizational management and the JOHSC or Safety Representative?*
- *Is the Policy signed by senior management of the organization?*

ELEMENT 2: Compliance Assurance

Element 2 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit is an evaluation as to whether the employer assures compliance with occupational health and safety laws and conformance with internal policies and rules. Simple possession of the relevant laws and existence of company policies is not sufficient.

Sample Questions for Element 2:

- *Is the Occupational Health and Safety Act and/or the Canada Labour Code and pertinent regulations posted at all worksites?*
- *Are employees aware of the OH&S Legislation and Regulations?*
- *Are employees aware of internal OH&S policies and rules?*
- *Are employees aware of the Internal Responsibility System?*
- *Are employees aware of their OH&S rights and how to exercise their rights as per occupational health and safety legislation?*
- *Is there a follow-up process established for instances of non-compliance with legislation or non-conformance with company policies or rules?*

ELEMENT 3: Detailed Responsibilities

Element 3 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit is an evaluation as to whether the employer defines the detailed responsibilities of all workplace parties for occupational health and safety, and whether those parties are aware of their responsibilities.

Sample Questions for Element 3:

- *Are employees aware of their OH&S responsibilities in keeping with the Internal Responsibility System? Is this reviewed regularly with employees (at least once a year)?*
- *Are managers and supervisors aware of their OH&S responsibilities as per the OH&S legislation and the organizational OH&S Policy?*
- *Are OH&S legislation and responsibilities reviewed with new employees during orientation?*
- *Are OH&S legislation and responsibilities reviewed during safety training, safety meetings and yearly occupational health and safety reviews?*
- *Are sub-contractors aware of the OH&S legislation and the organization's health and safety policies and rules when working at the employer's workplace?*

ELEMENT 4: Management Communications and Commitment

Element 4 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit evaluates the following:

- employer upper management (i.e. second line supervisors or higher) communicates adequately with the employees about occupational health and safety, and;
- communications demonstrate the personal support of the management for the occupational health and safety program.

Sample Questions for Element 4:

- *Is there a communications plan for how and when management communicates occupational health and safety information to the employees?*
- *Is an organizational health and safety plan done each year and signed off by senior management?*
- *Do managers/supervisors conduct regular organizational tours and inspections?*
- *Does senior management communication demonstrate management's personal support of the organization's occupational health and safety system?*

ELEMENT 5: Training - Management

Element 5 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit evaluates whether there is adequate training for management and supervisors with regard to occupational health and safety. Element 5 evaluates whether:

- management and supervisors are adequately aware of:
 - the company's OH&S program
 - management and supervisor responsibilities under OHS law and any company policies or rules
 - OH&S law in general
 - the importance of safe work procedures
 - any hazards that, in the opinion of the auditor, are of such importance to merit awareness by management and supervisors.
- there is adequate input into the design of the OH&S training program from the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee or other appropriate employee representatives.
- there are adequate records of training to allow each of the above points to be determined through documentation.

Sample Questions for Element 5:

- *Are managers and supervisors adequately aware of the organization's occupational health and safety program?*
- *Are managers and supervisors adequately aware of their responsibilities under the OH&S legislation and the organization's OH&S policies and rules?*
- *Are managers and supervisors adequately aware of the OH&S legislation as it applies to their workplace?*
- *Are managers and supervisors adequately aware of the importance of safe work procedures?*
- *Are managers and supervisors adequately aware of hazards that exist in their workplace?*
- *Does management understand the need for adequate JOHSC and/or employee input into the design of the organization's OH&S program?*
- *Are adequate training records available to determine the criteria required by this Element?*

ELEMENT 6: Training - On-the-Job

Element 6 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit evaluates whether there is adequate training for non-management and non-supervisory personnel (i.e. employees) with regard to occupational health and safety. Element 6 evaluates whether:

- non-management and non-supervisory personnel are adequately aware of:
 - the company's OH&S program
 - their responsibilities under law
 - their responsibilities under any company policies or rules
 - OH&S law in general
 - OH&S law specific to a worker's work area
 - the importance of safe work procedures and their development process
 - any hazards that, in the opinion of the auditor, are of such importance to merit awareness by non-management and non-supervisory personnel

- there is adequate input into the design of the OH&S training program from the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee or other appropriate employee representatives
- there are adequate records of training to allow each of the above points to be determined through documentation.

Sample Questions for Element 6:

- *Are employees adequately aware of the organization’s OH&S program?*
- *Are employees adequately aware of their responsibilities under OH&S law?*
- *Are employees adequately aware of their responsibilities as per company policies and rules?*
- *Are employees adequately aware of OH&S legislation as it applies to their workplace?*
- *Are employees adequately aware of the importance of safe work procedures and how they are developed?*
- *Are employees adequately aware of hazards that exist in their workplace?*
- *Are employees involved, either directly or through the JOHSC, in the design of the OH&S training program?*
- *Are adequate training records available to determine the criteria required by this Element?*

ELEMENT 7: Training – Orientation

Element 7 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit evaluates whether there is an adequate OHS orientation process for new personnel or persons new to a particular job. Element 7 determines whether “new-to-the-job” employees are adequately aware of:

- the employer’s OH&S program that includes policies and safe work procedures as it applies to the new job
- how to perform the new duties
- responsibilities under law

In addition, the audit shall determine whether:

- there is adequate input into the design of the OH&S orientation training program from the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee or other appropriate employee representatives
- there are adequate records of orientation training to allow each of the above points to be determined through documentation
- orientation training is given before a worker is exposed to any hazard on a new job

Sample Questions for Element 7:

- *Are new employees aware of the employer’s OH&S program, including OH&S policies and safe work procedures as they apply to the new job?*
- *Are new employees trained adequately to perform their duties?*
- *Are new employees adequately aware of their rights and responsibilities as per the OH&S legislation?*
- *Is there adequate input into the design of the OH&S orientation program from the JOHSC and/or other appropriate employee representatives?*
- *Is orientation training provided to employees before they are exposed to any hazard on a new job?*
- *Are adequate training records available to determine the criteria required by this Element?*

ELEMENT 8: Worker Participation / JOHSC / Health and Safety Representative

Element 8 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit evaluates the level of participation of workers in occupational health and safety. Where the workplace has a Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC) or a Health and Safety Representative, the audit determines whether:

- a JOHSC or Health and Safety Representative exists in all workplaces where they are required by law to exist
- the process for selecting Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee members or Health and Safety Representatives meets the requirements of the law
- appropriate training is provided to the OH&S Committee Member/Safety Representative, to enable them to adequately perform their OH&S duties
- the frequency of committee meetings is adequate
- committee minutes are adequate
- management response to issues raised in committee minutes or through other means is adequate and meets the requirements of the law.

Sample Questions for Element 8:

- *Does a Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee or Health and Safety Representative exist in the workplace?*
- *Is the process for selecting the JOHSC members or Health and Safety Representative in compliance with the OH&S legislation?*
- *Have the JOHSC members or H&S Representative received appropriate training to enable them to adequately perform their duties?*
- *Has the JOHSC established terms of reference and/or rules of procedure?*
- *Are JOHSC meetings held on an adequate frequency and are adequate meeting minutes kept?*
- *Is management response to issues raised by the JOHSC adequate, and does it meet the requirements of the OH&S legislation?*

ELEMENT 9: Incident Reports and Investigations

Element 9 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit deals with all aspects of the incident reporting and investigation process. Incident investigations give you the immediate and root causes of an incident and remedial action required. Proper incident reports and investigations can be the benchmark to learn how to avoid the incident and injury from happening in the future.

For Element 9, important points that should be considered and built into the incident investigation process are:

- the depth and detail of the investigation
- the process through which it is determined which incidents will be formally investigated and a written investigation report produced
- the training of persons doing investigations
- follow-up action resulting from an incident investigation
- the involvement of the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee or other appropriate employee representatives
- procedures for recognizing incidents that are substantially similar to previous incidents (i.e. "repeaters")

Sample Questions for Element 9:

- *Is there a written incident/accident investigation procedure that includes how to report an incident/accident?*
- *Does the procedure identify the process for determining how and when incidents are investigated?*
- *Are timeframes established for each aspect of the incident/accident investigation process – reporting, investigating, recommendations, remedial actions, sign-off?*
- *Is there a standard incident/accident report form that includes immediate cause(s), root cause(s), and remedial actions?*
- *Have persons involved in incident/accident investigation received adequate training to carry out their duties?*
- *Do JOHSC members or the H&S Representative participate in incident/accident investigations?*
- *Are investigation results communicated to all employees?*
- *Is there a process to identify recurring or similar incidents/accidents?*

ELEMENT 10: Inspections

Element 10 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit addresses workplace inspections. This element shall determine whether all workplaces are regularly inspected for health and safety hazards. In particular, the audit shall evaluate the adequacy of:

- the frequency of inspections, with annual inspections being the minimum
- pre-use inspection of equipment
- the comprehensiveness of inspections (i.e. are all workplaces inspected or just some subset)
- the training of persons doing inspections
- follow-up action from workplace inspection
- the involvement of the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee or other appropriate employee representatives
- procedures for recognizing issues that are substantially similar to issues identified on previous inspections (i.e. "repeaters").

Sample Questions for Element 10:

- *Is there an appropriate inspection schedule (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or yearly)?*
- *Are pre-use of equipment inspections carried out?*
- *Are inspection checklists used?*
- *Are inspections carried out as required by OH&S law and organizational policies and rules?*
- *Are managers, employees and JOHSC/Safety Representatives involved in inspections?*
- *Are inspections carried out on a regular basis in all workplaces?*
- *Are employees doing inspections adequately trained to do inspections?*
- *Are workplace deficiencies that are identified in the inspections being remedied?*
- *Is there a process in place to identify issues that have been identified in previous inspections?*
- *Is there adequate record keeping of inspection reports?*
- *Do senior organization managers review inspection reports?*

ELEMENT 11: Hazard Assessments

Element 11 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit addresses hazard assessments. Hazard assessments require a process where workplace hazards are identified and assessed proactively. This element does not include regular inspections and similar activities. In particular, the audit shall identify and assess all workplace hazards including ergonomic, violence and indoor air quality. The audit shall determine whether:

- there is an adequate process to identify hazards or injuries
- there is adequate training appropriate to the hazards of the workplace
- there are adequate company policies, procedures or rules to minimize identified hazards and injuries.

Sample Questions for Element 11:

- *Is there a system in place to identify all workplace hazards including physical, ergonomic, indoor air quality (biological, chemical and particulate substance) and workplace violence?*
- *As part of the hazard assessment system, are controls in place to limit hazard exposure?*
- *As part of the hazard assessment system, is there a process to rectify identified hazards?*
- *Are new and seasoned employees trained in hazard identification and hazard control?*
- *Is the JOHSC or Safety Representative trained in hazard identification and evaluation?*
- *Are there written organizational policies, procedures, or rules in place to identify hazards and injuries?*
- *Is the workplace hazard assessment system updated with changes to organizational procedures?*
- *Is the workplace hazard identification process reviewed on a regular basis?*

ELEMENT 12: Work Refusal Process

Element 12 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit evaluates whether:

- employees are knowledgeable of their right to refuse dangerous work
- the employer deals with employees exercising their right to refuse in accordance with the law.

Sample Questions for Element 12:

- *Are employees aware of their right to refuse unhealthy or unsafe work?*
- *Are employees aware of the process to report a workplace refusal, including legislation?*
- *Is there a written procedure and forms to document the process?*
- *Is training given to employees on the right to refuse unsafe and unhealthy work?*
- *Are employees aware that if one worker exercises his/her right to refuse an unsafe job, they have to be advised of the refusal if they are asked to do the same work?*
- *Is the employer aware that they can't discriminate against a worker who exercises his/her right to refuse unsafe or unhealthy work?*

ELEMENT 13: Safe Work Practices and Procedures

Element 13 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit evaluates whether:

- there exists an adequate process to determine when written safe work practices and procedures are needed
- there is adequate input from the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee or other appropriate employee representatives in the development of safe work practices and procedures
- based upon a review of a sample of safe work practices and procedures, the safe work practices and procedures are adequate for their specific purposes

Sample Questions for Element 13:

- *Does the employer have a policy and procedure that outlines the process on developing, implementing, and reviewing safe work practices and procedures?*
- *Is there adequate input from the JOHSC or Safety Representative in the development of safe work practices and procedures?*
- *Are safe work practices and procedures adequate and appropriate for the work performed in the workplace?*
- *Are safe work practices and procedures reviewed annually or when work practices change? Is there documentation to support these reviews and/or changes?*

ELEMENT 14: Emergency Preparedness

Element 14 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit evaluates whether the employer has adequate procedures in place to address the following:

- first aid; fire response; evacuation; environmental pollutants response;
- evacuation procedures beyond those required for fire;
- response to large incidents.

Sample Questions for Element 14:

- *Are there staff trained in First Aid, in keeping with the Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety (NS OH&S) First Aid Regulations?*
- *Are first aid kits available and maintained as per the NS OH&S First Aid Regulations?*
- *Is there adequate staff available for first aid in the workplace as per the NS OH&S First Aid Regulations?*
- *Are there adequate fire extinguishers in the workplace and are they inspected regularly?*
- *In case of fire or emergency in the workplace, is there an emergency plan in place that includes emergency exits, fire/emergency wardens, and assembly areas? Has this plan been practiced on a regular basis?*
- *Is there an emergency plan in place to evacuate employees from exposure to environmental pollutants, contain exposure where appropriate, and report to authorities?*
- *Is emergency preparedness training given to all employees who deal with all workplace emergencies?*
- *Are emergency procedures posted at relevant places in the organization; i.e. lunch/common rooms, exits, safety notice boards, etc.*
- *Is emergency preparedness updated with organizational changes?*

ELEMENT 15: Employer Rules

Element 15 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit evaluates whether:

- there are adequate employer policies and rules for all hazards warranting such action
- there is adequate employee input into all company policies and rules aimed at OH&S issues.

This element does not include issues that are covered in other criteria, such as Permits/Special Procedures, Safe Work Practices, Personal Protective Equipment and others.

Sample Questions for Element 15:

- *Are there adequate employer policies and rules for all workplace hazards where warranted?*
- *Is there adequate JOHSC/Safety Representative/Employee input and participation in company occupational health and safety policies and rules?*
- *Are there rules in place to deal with workplace discipline?*

ELEMENT 16: Contractor Health and Safety

Element 16 of the **WCB Safety Certified** audit evaluates whether Contractors hired by the employer:

- are informed of relevant health and safety issues and policies before they start to work at a site
- have the proper training to perform the task they have been assigned
- have the proper equipment to perform the task they have been assigned
- follow all applicable laws and company rules.

Sample Questions for Element 16:

- *Is the Contractor informed of relevant health and safety issues and policies before they start work at the site?*
- *Is the Contractor advised of the proper PPE to wear and when?*
- *Does the Contractor have the proper training to do the job required by the organization?*
- *Does the Contractor have the proper and safe equipment to perform the required task?*
- *Has the Contractor signed a declaration to agree to the organization's occupational health and safety rules and policies, and to adhere to occupational health and safety law and regulations?*
- *Does the Contractor have WCB coverage or private insurer coverage?*
- *Has a WCB Clearance Letter been provided to confirm Contractor's WCB account is in good standing?*

ELEMENT 17: Data Analysis / Objectives / Standards

Element 17 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit evaluates whether:

- appropriate statistics for tracking OH&S are generated
- appropriate objectives or standards have been established against which the occupational health and safety program may be evaluated
- appropriate action is taken when the data fails to meet established objectives or standards.

Sample Questions for Element 17:

- *Is there a tracking system in place to track daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly occupational health and safety program statistics?*
- *Are there appropriate objectives or standards established to evaluate the organization's occupational health and safety program?*
- *Is there a yearly occupational health and safety plan with objectives? If so, is it communicated to all employees?*
- *Are there standards in place for employees to deal with:*
 - *incident/accident investigation?*
 - *inspections?*
 - *personal protective equipment?*
 - *training?*
 - *emergency preparedness?*
 - *other OH&S system elements?*
- *Is appropriate action taken when established objectives or standards are not met?*

ELEMENT 18: Operational Health and Safety Meetings

Element 18 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit evaluates whether:

- regular health and safety meetings at which employees may be briefed on hazards and reminded of the importance of occupational health and safety are held at an adequate frequency
- attendance at such meetings is adequate
- topics at such meetings are adequately relevant.

Sample Questions for Element 18:

- *Are regular health and safety meetings held in keeping with organizational policy?*
- *Are employees briefed on hazards and reminded of the importance of occupational health and safety?*
- *Is attendance adequate at occupational health and safety meetings?*
- *Are topics at occupational health and safety meetings relevant?*
- *Do operational health and safety meetings follow agendas?*
- *Are operational health and safety meeting issues recorded, acted upon, and resolved?*
- *Do supervisors/managers take part in operational health and safety meetings?*

ELEMENT 19: Maintenance Policy & Program

Element 19 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit evaluates whether:

- major equipment is maintained in a healthful and safe condition
- the competence levels or criteria for maintenance personnel are adequate
- manufacturers' recommendations are adhered to
- replacement parts meet manufacturers' specifications
- there is adequate documentation of major equipment maintenance.

The element is not meant to cover minor tools or office equipment.

Sample Questions for Element 19:

- *Is all equipment maintained in a healthful and safe condition?*
- *Do competent personnel maintain the organization's equipment?*
- *Are recommendations followed as per manufacturer's specifications?*
- *Do replacement parts meet manufacturer's specifications?*
- *Is there adequate and current documentation of major equipment maintenance?*

ELEMENT 20: Management Performance Standards

Element 20 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit deals with performance standards and expectations for management and supervisory staff as they relate to occupational health and safety. Element 20 evaluates whether those performance standards:

- are written
- are reviewed at least annually with each individual manager
- deal in adequate detail with the manager's individual responsibilities.

Sample Questions for Element 20:

- *Are there written occupational health and safety standards and expectations for management and supervisors?*
- *Is occupational health and safety performance part of the annual management performance reviews?*
- *Are occupational health and safety standards set for each supervisory and managerial role? This question should look at training of employees, inspections, incident/accident investigation, personal protective equipment, ergonomics, occupational hygiene, etc.*

ELEMENT 21: Permits and Special Procedures

Element 21 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit evaluates whether:

- the process to identify the need for a permitting or special procedure is adequate
- there exist all permits or special procedures that, in the auditor's opinion, are needed
- all permits or special procedures are adequate. Where the number of such permits or procedures is large, the adequacy of an appropriate subset may be determined.

Examples of such permits and procedures are lock-out and confined space procedures.

Sample Questions for Element 21:

- *Does the organization have a system in place to identify the need for permits from regulatory authorities?*
- *Does the organization have a procedure for special permits?*
- *Does the organization have a system in place to identify the need for special procedures, such as confined space, fall protection, lock-out/tag-out, hot work, chemical product, biological substances, etc.?*
- *Are safe work permits posted?*
- *Are employees aware of permits and special procedures?*

ELEMENT 22: Personal Protective Equipment

Element 22 of a **WCB Safety Certified** audit determines whether:

- all required personal protective equipment is available
- all available personal protective equipment is appropriate to the hazard
- all workers who use personal protective equipment are trained in the need for and use, care and maintenance of any personal protective equipment they use
- the appropriate personal protective equipment is worn when required
- the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee or other appropriate employee representatives are involved in the selection of personal protective equipment to an appropriate extent.

Sample Questions for Element 22:

- *Is personal protective equipment available to all staff?*
- *Is personal protective equipment adequate and appropriate for the workplace hazards?*
- *Does the personal protective equipment meet recognized standards?*
- *Are employees trained in the need for personal protective equipment, the use of the PPE, the care of the PPE and the maintenance of the PPE?*
- *Is personal protective equipment inspected on a regular basis to identify deficiencies?*
- *Is personal protective equipment worn when required? If not worn, are employees aware of the disciplinary procedure for not using PPE?*
- *Does the JOHSC or Safety Representative participate in advising on appropriate PPE – and/or in the selection of appropriate PPE – for the work being performed?*

NOTE:

Generally it is up to the employer and employees to decide who pays for personal protective equipment and whether it is cost shared. However, the Occupational Safety General Regulations do require the employer to provide or purchase several specific devices:

- Respiratory Equipment - section 13(1)
- Personal Flotation Device - section 14
- Work clothes - section 22(2)(a)
- Personal Protective equipment used with:
 - Rechargeable Storage Batteries - section 43(2)(a)(i),(ii) and (iii)
 - Energized electrical installations - section 123(1)
 - Jobs that involve confined space entry - section 130(4), section 134 and 135(1)(a)

Even if the employee purchases the equipment, the employer must still ensure the equipment is the correct type and is in safe working condition.

*(From **Personal Protective Equipment: A guide to Part 3 of the Occupational Safety General Regulations**, September 2004 – Nova Scotia Labour and Advanced Education, Occupational Health and Safety Division)*