

# Guide to On-the-Job Safety and Health

in Canada

**E**mployers and employees share the responsibility for health and safety in the workplace.

The federal, provincial and territorial governments all regulate and enforce safety and health in the workplace.

## What do I need to know?

- The federal government and all Canadian provinces and territories have adopted safety and health laws and regulations.
- You are entitled to work in a safe workplace where your health will be protected for your sake and for the sake of your family and the other workers in your place of employment.
- The federal government or the provincial/territorial government protects your health and safety at work.

## Does the federal or the provincial law protect me?

Unless you work in an industry that is federally regulated, the laws that govern you with regard to occupational safety and health are those of the province or territory where you work.

## Why should I care about workplace safety?

The purpose of work safety laws is to protect workers like you. If employers and workers all follow the rules, you are more likely to avoid getting hurt and you can keep earning money to support yourself and your family.



## What are my responsibilities?

- You must follow the regulations on safety and health in the province or territory where you work.
- You must wear and learn to use protective equipment that is needed for your particular task.
- You must report any health hazard to your supervisor immediately.
- You must protect yourself and your co-workers as much as possible.



You are entitled to a safe workplace even if you are a foreign worker and/or do not have a valid work permit.

**Federal industries subject to the *Canada Labour Code* include:**

- industries that cross provincial and national borders (bus operations, trucking, pipelines, ferries, shipping, etc.);
- air transport, aircraft and airports;
- telecommunications (radio and TV broadcasting, telephone and cable systems);
- banks;
- works declared by Parliament to be for the general advantage of Canada (e.g., grain elevators, uranium mining and processing);
- most federal Crown corporations.

**I am a farm worker. Is my work covered?**

- The farm industry is covered in every province except Ontario, Alberta and Prince Edward Island.
- In all other provinces and territories you are covered by occupational health and safety (OSH) regulations and have the same rights as a worker in any other industry.
- In Alberta contact OSH at 1-866-415-8690 for information on coverage and your rights. Ask for information about the Farm Safety Program.
- In Ontario contact OSH at 1-800-268-8013. Ask for information about the Farm Safety Program.

**Field sanitation standards for farm workers**

Unless you are in Ontario, Alberta, Manitoba or Prince Edward Island, you have the following rights.

- Your employer must provide you with clean drinking water while you are working.
- You are entitled to have easy access to toilets that are kept in good condition.
- You are entitled to have easy access to washing facilities that must be kept in good condition.
- In British Columbia, only some employers must ensure these rights. In B.C., call the local office of the Workers' Compensation Board to find out if your employer is covered.

**What are my employer's responsibilities?**

- Your employer must follow all workplace health and safety rules.
- Your employer must make sure that all equipment is kept in safe working order.
- Your employer must ensure that you have the skill and training needed to perform the task you have been assigned.
- Your employer must make sure that you are not harassed or retaliated against for reporting unsafe conditions.
- Your employer must make sure that you are aware of safety and health hazards before you take on any task or project.



### What is a joint committee?

- Joint committees give you a voice and allow management and employees to work together to promote a safer and healthier workplace.
- Joint committees must be established in certain circumstances, such as when 20 or more workers are employed (10 or more in Newfoundland and Labrador, and Saskatchewan) or when they are required by OSH authorities.
- Generally, at least half of the committee must be made up of workers.
- For more information about joint committees in the province or territory where you are working, contact your local OSH office.

### Where do I go to complain about unsafe or dangerous conditions?

- If you believe your workplace is unsafe or dangerous, or if you or someone else is hurt on the job because of unsafe conditions, you can complain to the OSH office.
- Inspectors will be sent to investigate the problem.
- Inspectors make sure that your work environment is safe and healthy.
- When you file a complaint or refuse work because it is dangerous, inspectors must inspect your workplace and work with the employer to fix the problem and ensure that you do not put yourself in danger. Inspectors may issue compliance orders and have dangerous equipment shut down or replaced. Employers who fail to comply with OSH laws can be fined.
- Inspectors have access to the workplace at any reasonable hour.
- Be sure that you let the inspectors know all of your concerns about safety and health in your workplace.

### How can I tell if my work is unsafe?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are you properly trained for the task you are performing?
- Are you supplied with the correct safety equipment when performing your task?
- Is the work you are doing unusually stressful because of the risk involved?
- Do you fear for your life or your safety when performing your job?
- Are you provided with eye protection if you work near chemicals?
- Do you work close to hazardous materials?

These are just some of the questions you should be asking yourself to see whether your work is unsafe.

#### Construction workers in Ontario

- Certain provinces have special health and safety regulations for construction workers. Most construction workers in Canada are employed in Ontario.
- You may not work at a construction site in Ontario if you are younger than 16 years of age.
- You and your employer must complete a registration form from the Ministry of Labour in Ontario.
- Your employer must write down emergency procedures in case there is an emergency in the workplace. These procedures must be placed where you can easily find the information.
- Your employer must ensure that you have access to a telephone or a two-way radio in case of an emergency.
- You must be trained for protection from falling and be protected by the use of one of the following mechanisms:
  - guardrails;
  - protective coverings;
  - a travel-restraint system;
  - a fall-restricting system;
  - a fall-arrest system;
  - a safety net.

### **The right to refuse dangerous work**

- If you believe the work you are doing or have been assigned is dangerous, then you are entitled to refuse this work.
- You must be paid until the danger you speak of is removed, you are satisfied that the problem has been corrected or no longer exists, or an inspector tells you that it is safe to do the work.
- Your employer cannot retaliate against you when, acting in good faith, you refuse to work in a dangerous workplace or refuse to perform dangerous work.
- Each jurisdiction has its own investigation and appeal procedures. Contact your provincial or federal OSH office immediately for more information.

### **What if I am hurt on the job?**

- If you suffer an injury on the job, you are entitled to workers' compensation benefits.
- Some provinces exclude farm workers and domestic workers from compulsory coverage, but your employer can easily choose to have coverage.
- For more information see [\*Guide to On-the-Job Injuries in Canada\*](#).



Commission for Labor Cooperation