

## **Element 5: Inspections**

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## Element 5 Inspections - Planning and Conducting Workplace Inspections

### Legislation

Workplace Safety and Health Act section 7.4(5):

“(e) A schedule for the regular inspection of the workplace and of work processes and procedures at the workplace;”

### Purpose and Responsibilities

The purpose of this section is to provide a guideline for scheduling and conducting formal and informal inspections of the workplace, work processes, and procedures. The purpose of inspections is to identify potential workplace safety hazards and to develop appropriate control measures to eliminate or minimize those hazards. The Department of Labour and Immigration specifies that Workplace Safety and Health Committee inspections should focus on the general **physical conditions** of the workplace. Hazards associated with work activities such as ergonomic hazards or violence hazards will be identified in the Occupational Hazard Risk Assessment process (see p.).

Inspections can be:

- **Formal or Planned:** scheduled walks through the workplace, selected work areas, and/or work practices and processes conducted by WSH Committees on a quarterly basis. See p. 97 for a workplace inspection form
- **Informal:** unscheduled and spontaneous examinations of the workplace conducted by workers and supervisors.

**The Employer** must ensure that supervisors have a clear idea of what is expected of them and what they should do when a problem is reported. Employers must support supervisors by ensuring that they have the authority and resources needed to take corrective action. Once Safety and Health concerns are brought to the attention of the employer, the employer must take corrective action or provide the Committee with an explanation within 30 days of notification.

**Workplace Safety and Health Committees** plan, conduct, report on, and monitor inspections. Where a WSH Committee exists, at least four Committee members will participate in the workplace inspection – with an equal number of members representing workers and the employer. Where a WSH Committee does not exist and a WSH representative has been appointed, the worker representative with a representative of the employer will perform the workplace inspection function.

A schedule for inspections must be developed by the WSH Committee and attached to this manual. Inspection Schedules should include what will be inspected (workplace inspection form), by whom and how frequently. The Workplace Inspection Form is

intended to assist WSH Committees and Representatives to inspect the work environment and contains a checklist of areas or items to be inspected and examples of the types of things to check and consider during the inspection process. WSH Committees and Representatives should feel free to add to the checklist as required to ensure that their unique work environments is reflected in the form. WSH Committees must also recognize that, depending on the workplace, not all categories listed on the checklist will apply. The checklist should reflect the unique characteristics of the workplace and take into account all aspects of workplace conditions including:

- the environment - including noise, lighting, temperature, and ventilation;
- equipment - including panic alarms, workstations, vehicles, and personal protective equipment; and
- chemical and biological substances.

All inspection forms must be maintained as part of the WSH Committee minutes and should also be posted on the WSH Bulletin Board. WSH Committee members are encouraged to take any appropriate hazard recognition and control training that is made available to them (such as the Chemical and Biological Hazard Control or Musculoskeletal Injury Risk Assessment courses offered by the Department of Labour and Immigration).

**Supervisors** also have a role in safety inspections because of their familiarity with staff, equipment and the work environment. Supervisors should conduct informal inspections of their area of responsibility, and must respond immediately all safety and health concerns. While it is the supervisor's responsibility to provide a safe and healthy workplace, supervisors cannot inspect off-site workplaces to which field staff is assigned. Therefore, field staff must be trained in recognizing hazards, and making appropriate decisions to protect themselves and others.

## **Training Requirements**

**Workplace Safety and Health Committee** members should attend hazard recognition and control training that is made available to them (such as the Chemical and Biological Hazard Control or Musculoskeletal Injury Risk Assessment courses offered by the Department of Labour and Immigration).

**Supervisors** must receive some training in the performance of their duties regarding conducting inspections.

**Off-Site Workers** must receive training for recognizing hazards and making appropriate decisions to protect themselves and others as part of a Working Alone Plan.

## **Conducting a Workplace Safety and Health Inspection**

The purpose of regular inspections by Committee members is:

- to listen to the concerns of workers and gain further understanding of their jobs and tasks;
- to identify existing and potential hazards which will be discussed at WSH Committee meetings; and
- to bring safety and health concerns identified by the inspection to the employer.

The following steps should be taken when conducting a WSH workplace inspection.

#### Pre-Inspection Meetings:

Before the inspection, the WSH Committee should document the work environment that they are responsible for inspecting, including indoor or outdoor areas. When more than one WSH Committee is located in a building or workspace, the WSH Committees will meet (at least once per year) to document all of the areas requiring inspection and to review and record the areas for which they will assume WSH inspection responsibilities. These areas can include: common areas, storage facilities, employee offices and cubicles as well as outdoor spaces such as on-site green spaces, parking lots, sidewalks and entryways. Attaching a Floor Plan of the area under review can be helpful in this regard as each separate area or section under review can be easily identified for reference. In addition, the committee should review documents that may help to identify, assess and control hazards.

Examples include:

- Inspection reports and records of concerns - these files may show degenerative trends, recurring concerns and ongoing problems;
- Incident reports, WCB claims and first aid registers - these may show where and how people are being injured or made sick;
- Product documentation - documents for chemicals (Material Safety Data Sheets or MSDS), machinery, equipment and tools can help identify hazards and suggest controls;
- Other sources of information on potential workplace hazards such as Workplace Safety and Health Division publications and industry literature; and
- Plans and diagrams - reviewing work process and floor plans, etc. can identify hazards, such as work area design flaws.

#### What to do During Inspections

(see Section 3 of this manual for the Workplace Inspection Form):

- Follow-up – ask workers about the effectiveness of corrective action taken since the last inspection;
- Check on status of on-going inspections - see if workers, supervisors and maintenance personnel are performing necessary on-going inspections;
- Communicate with workers – ask workers about their concerns;

- Take careful notes – describe each hazard, its seriousness, where it was found. Note all hazards, even those corrected at once. If a solution to the problem can be identified immediately, note it down under ‘Recommended Corrective Action’, otherwise leave for discussion at the next WSH Committee meeting; and
- Communicate with supervisors – discuss findings with the supervisor.

#### Handling the Results:

- Keep careful records of inspections - inspection records can be useful in tracking the progress of corrective action, and identifying degenerative trends;
- Create a consolidated inspection report - each hazard or concern must be clearly explained, its location precisely identified, and all hazards should be classified and ranked in order of importance;
- Inspection results should be reported regularly and consistently - reports help the Committee and employer identify problems, assess their probability and severity and take action;
- Put the results of the inspection and any unresolved concerns on the WSH Committee agenda - the Committee should discuss the agenda and develop proposals for corrective action;
- A record should be kept of the concerns discussed at the WSH Committee and the co-chairpersons should discuss the recommendations with the employer;
- File copies of each inspection report - they may be needed later for WCB claims and investigations, or for use by safety and health officers; and
- Post a copy of the inspection report in the workplace to let workers know what is being done about their concerns and keep workers who have raised concerns informed

#### When an Unsafe Condition is Found:

- The Committee is expected to bring safety and health concerns to the employer - these include hazards and concerns identified during an inspection or investigation;
- The Committee may ask the Workplace Safety and Health Division for advice about corrective actions to take [*The Act*, Section 41.1(4)];
- When the Committee reports an unsafe condition, the employer is expected to:
  - protect the safety and health of workers at risk until the unsafe condition or hazard is corrected
  - correct the basic cause of the problem
  - inform workers and the Committee about the corrective action taken or planned
  - provide the Committee with a written explanation within 30 days if a concern is not dealt with [*The Act*, section 41.1(2)].



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<b>Windows, Doors and Screens</b> –in good repair, window coverings allow the control of light			
<b>Ceiling</b> – tiles in place and not loose, bowed or stained			
<b>Pests and Mould</b> - Workplace free from mould and signs of pest infestation			
<b>Corridors</b> – free from trip hazards, uncluttered – minimum of 3 feet wide			
<b>Other</b>			

<b>Inspectors' Section</b>		<b>Employer/ WSH Committee Follow-Up</b>	
<b><u>COFFEE/LUNCH AREA</u></b>			
<b>Inspection Item/Area</b>	<b>Identified Hazards</b>	<b>Recommended Corrective Action</b>	<b>Action Taken/Completion Date</b>
<b>Cleanliness</b> – counters, taps, sinks and water cooler clean and garbage can emptied regularly			
<b>Supplies</b> – hand soap, dish soap, single use hand towels available			
<b>Appliances</b> – in good repair and do not present electrical or other hazard; CSA approved			
<b>Other</b>			
<b><u>STAFF OFFICES/CUBICLES/MEETING ROOMS/RECEPTION AREAS</u></b>			
<b>Desk and overhead lighting</b> – adequate and no glare			

<b>Furniture</b> – in good repair			
<b>Shelves</b> – in good repair and not overloaded; large and heavy objects on lower shelves			
<b>If clients are interviewed in space</b> - is space organized for maximum employee safety?			
<b>Floors</b> - clear of clutter and trip hazards			
<b>Electrical</b> - no more than 2 items plugged into electrical outlet unless a power bar with fuse is used; cords in good repair			
<b>Other</b>			

<b>Inspectors' Section</b>		<b>Employer/ WSH Committee Follow-Up</b>	
<b><u>WASHROOMS</u></b>			
<b>Inspection Item/Area</b>	<b>Identified Hazards</b>	<b>Recommended Corrective Action</b>	<b>Action Taken/completion date</b>
<b>Cleanliness</b> – cleaned daily and garbage emptied regularly			
<b>Supplies</b> – hand soap, single use hand towels, and toilet paper available			
<b>Ventilation and Lighting</b> – good ventilation and lighting			
<b>Other</b>			
<b><u>COMMON AREAS</u></b>			

<b>Parking Lot</b> – clear of obstruction, well lit			
<b>Foyers</b> – adequate security, lighting, no trip hazards			
<b>Elevators</b> – valid inspection certificate, good lighting, no trip hazards			
<b>Other</b>			

**PRINTER/PHOTOCOPIER AREAS**

<b>Shelves</b> – in good repair and not overloaded			
<b>Printer and photocopiers</b> – located at least four feet from nearest worker			
<b>Other</b>			

<b>Inspectors' Section</b>	<b>Employer/WSH Committee Follow-Up</b>
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**SUPPLY ROOMS**

<b>Inspection Item/Area</b>	<b>Identified Hazards</b>	<b>Recommended Corrective Action</b>	<b>Action taken/ completion Date</b>
<b>Cleanliness</b> – free of clutter			
<b>Supplies</b> – stored securely and not fire hazards			
<b>Chemicals</b> – stored safely, properly labelled and Material Safety Data Sheets available			
<b>Other</b>			

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

<b>Exit signs</b> – in good repair and visible; fire doors self-closing			
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<b>Fire alarm pull stations and portable fire extinguishers</b> – visible and unobstructed; fire extinguisher full and with valid inspection certificate			
<b>Emergency Plans:</b> evacuation plan and names of fire wardens posted on WSH Bulletin Board;			
<b>Up-to-date list of staff in workplace (e.g. in/out board) :</b>			
<b>First aid kit:</b> first aid kit readily available and well stocked; supplies within expiry dates; first aiders listed on Bulletin Board			
<b>Flashlights/backup lights</b> –backup lights installed and checked yearly or flashlight charged and located in reception area			
<b>Personal Protective Equipment</b> – in good repair			

<b>Inspectors' Section</b>		<b>Employer/WSH Committee Follow-Up</b>	
<b><u>ADMINISTRATIVE</u></b>			
<b>Inspection Item</b>	<b>Identified Hazards</b>	<b>Recommended Corrective Action</b>	<b>Action taken/completion Date</b>
<b>WSH Bulletin Board</b> – installed and required information posted: - emergency phone numbers - minutes of WSH committee meetings - trained first aid list - fire wardens - evacuation plan			
<b>FSH WSH Manual</b> – stored in a location known and accessible to all employees			

<p><b>Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) –MSDS</b> for controlled substances and an inventory sheet of hazardous substances used in the workplace on file and accessible to employees and emergency responders.</p>			
<p><b>Other</b></p>			

**INSPECTORS' SIGNATURES**

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