

Occupational
Health and Safety
SCHOOLKIT

For Alberta School
Authorities K-12

Alberta



**WORK SAFE
ALBERTA**

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Introduction

This *Occupational Health and Safety Schoolkit* is another step toward enhancing the health and safety within school authorities.

This *Schoolkit* supports Section 45(8) of the *Alberta School Act*, which states schools must be safe and healthy environments that foster respectful and responsible behaviours. When staff model safe and healthy behaviour, we promote a culture of safety, which positively affects the entire learning environment.

This *Schoolkit* introduces the *Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Act, Regulation and Code* (OHS legislation) to school authorities, superintendents and system administrators.

The *Schoolkit* describes your roles and responsibilities under the *Act*. It follows the school year, breaking your tasks into six manageable sections.

Each section introduces a task and then offers to-do lists and ready-made messages to help you communicate the importance of occupational health and safety, along with a commitment to make your schools and departments healthy and safe places to work. The *Schoolkit* then provides suggestions about how to carry your health and safety program forward after the first year. It also provides templates and sample forms for you to use.

The *Schoolkit* was developed by an advisory committee with representation from the:

- Association of Independent Schools and Colleges of Alberta
- College of Alberta School Superintendents
- The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools
- School Plant Officials' Society of Alberta
- Association of School Business Officials of Alberta
- Alberta Employment and Immigration
- Alberta Education
- Alberta School Boards Association

The *Schoolkit* committee would also like to thank Concordia High School, Central Alberta Christian High School, Edmonton Public School Board, Elves Special Needs Society, Living Waters Christian Academy, Londonderry Child Development Society, Parkland School Division, Pembina Hills Regional School Division, Phoenix Academy and the Alberta Municipal Health and Safety Association for sharing their documents and providing invaluable assistance.

Alberta Employment and Immigration, Workplace Health and Safety, is responsible for developing and enforcing occupational health and safety legislation. The *Schoolkit* does not change or replace any legislation. As an employer, you are responsible for ensuring that the work site is healthy and safe, and this *Schoolkit* offers guidelines to help you interpret and apply that legislation.

Workplace Health and Safety can provide you with many additional health and safety resources, including legislation, forms and guides. You can reach them online at www.worksafely.org or by phone at:

- 1-866-415-8690 (Toll-free within Alberta)
- 780-415-8690 (Edmonton and surrounding area)

Legislation

The *Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Act, Regulation and Code* (OHS legislation) exists to protect and promote the health and safety of all workers. You can find a copy of the legislation at www.qp.gov.ab.ca/documents/acts/O02.cfm or through the Alberta Queen's Printer:

Main Floor, Park Plaza
10611-98 Avenue,
Edmonton, AB T5K 2P7
Phone: 780 427-4952
Fax: 780 452-0668

Under the *OHS Act*, your workers include all paid workers, visitors, volunteers, contracted and temporary workers. The OHS legislation applies to all these individuals.

The Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) insures many of the people working in a school. All support staff and custodial staff have WCB coverage. The WCB also covers some teachers, such as those who teach career and technology studies and senior sciences, as well as anyone who performs duties related to the teaching of these courses.

Many teachers, however, do not have WCB coverage. Their coverage is through the Alberta School Employee Benefits Plan or another insurer.

The OHS legislation applies regardless of who the insurer is.

Worker Responsibilities

Employers and workers share responsibility for health and safety.

Workers must follow the occupational health and safety rules and regulations and co-operate with their employer to keep the workplace safe.

Workers have a responsibility to report any health and safety concerns or issues.

All workers must refuse unsafe work, if they have reasonable grounds to believe that the work involves imminent danger to themselves or others. Imminent danger is any workplace condition or practice, which could cause death or serious physical harm. It is an unusual danger that isn't a normal part of the job. If a teacher is required to work with a high-risk student, who has the potential to become extremely violent, that could be imminent danger. However, if the teacher has the training to deal with potentially violent students and the supports are there, he or she is not in imminent danger.

If a competent driver receives a vehicle with faulty brakes, then the driver is in imminent danger. The driver knows how to do his or her job. However, the work conditions are unsafe and could cause death or serious physical harm.

When the situation is unsafe, workers have the right and responsibility to refuse that work and they must inform their supervisor why they are refusing. Workers must also report all work-related pain, injury or illness to their supervisor as soon as possible. Workers cannot be disciplined for complying with the legislation.

Employer Responsibilities

The school authority is the employer. However, the employer can designate a representative, who then becomes the employer.

The school authority designates the superintendent, who in turn designates principals and department managers as representatives. The authority, superintendent or headmaster, principals and managers represent the employer and are responsible for health and safety in the areas they control.

As an employer, you must comply with the OHS legislation. The Act requires you to do everything reasonably practicable to protect the health and safety of your workers. “Reasonably practicable” recognizes that we cannot protect workers from hazards that are yet unknown. During the 1930s, many workers handled asbestos without wearing proper protective equipment. The employers who asked workers to carry out these unsafe practices weren’t intentionally endangering anyone’s health and safety because, at that time, the danger posed by asbestos was unknown.

The dictionary defines practicable as “capable of being put into practice; feasible.” It defines reasonable as “not extreme or excessive.” During winter months, colds and flus are common. The best way to protect a teacher’s health might be to prohibit all contact with students or to build classrooms where teachers are isolated from the students. These steps may prevent teachers from catching viruses, but they would prevent teachers from doing their jobs effectively. These steps are not reasonably practicable.

As an employer, you must look at what is feasible and reasonable, considering the hazards and the consequences if something goes wrong.

In a court of law, a judge or jury looks at whether the employer exercised due diligence. The best way to exercise due diligence is to comply with OHS legislation. Identify possible workplace hazards and carry out the appropriate corrective action to prevent incidents or injuries.

The court looks at **foreseeability**, **preventability** and the **possibility of control**.

- **Foreseeability** asks if a reasonable person could have foreseen that something could go wrong. Foreseeability does not excuse ignorance. Reasonable employers know about their businesses and about the hazards of operating them. Ignorance is not an adequate defence if others in your industry knew about the hazard.

- **Preventability** asks if there was an opportunity to prevent the injury or incident. The incident was not preventable, if you did everything reasonable to prevent it:
 - identified the hazard
 - put in adequate controls
 - prepared and enforced safe work procedures
 - trained the worker in safe work procedures
 - monitored the work and the worker and
 - corrected unsafe behaviour and conditions
- Preventability also asks if you have a progressive disciplinary policy, which ensures continued compliance with safety policies and procedures.
- The **possibility of control** looks at whether you had any control over the circumstances that resulted in the incident.

Unsafe Work

As an employer, you must advise all workers that they are to refuse unsafe work.

If you have reason to believe that an unsafe or dangerous condition exists, then you must stop the work.

If a worker refuses unsafe work, you must **investigate, correct** (if necessary) and **document** the situation.

Incidents

Workers must report work-related injuries and illnesses. If workers are physically injured at work, they must report this to their employer. Workers must report every injury – small or serious. A serious injury and illness is one that requires medical treatment and results in time away from work or a job change.

If a workplace incident or injury occurs, you must immediately:

- **seek** medical attention as required.
- **record** the injury on a first aid form. Workers are entitled to a copy of their first aid record. *See Appendix 16 for a sample form.*
- **report** the situation, if it is serious or could have been serious, to Alberta Employment and Immigration, Workplace Health and Safety.
- **report** the injury or illness (within 72 hours) to the WCB or other insurance provider, when applicable.
- **investigate, correct** (if necessary) and **document** the situation, keeping a copy of the report for future review by an occupational health and safety officer. *You can find a sample incident report form in Appendix 13 and a sample incident investigation form in Appendix 14.*

Serious injuries and accidents

Serious injuries and accidents include:

- (a) an injury or accident that results in death
- (b) an injury or accident that results in a worker's being admitted to a hospital for more than two days
- (c) an unplanned or uncontrolled explosion, fire or flood that causes a serious injury or that has the potential of causing a serious injury
- (d) the collapse or upset of a crane, derrick or hoist or
- (e) the collapse or failure of any component of a building or structure necessary for the structural integrity of the building or structure

August-September

Getting Started

A system-wide occupational health and safety program will protect the health and safety of all your workers. The program starts with you – the school authority – demonstrating your commitment to occupational health and safety. School administrators hear that commitment and then reinforce it within their schools.

After making and declaring your commitment, you will need to provide resources and personnel to help co-ordinate health and safety activities. You may consider creating a joint (employer and worker) health and safety committee, which receives specific occupational health and safety training, and works to identify and eliminate hazards and create a safe work environment. Training for committee members and anyone taking a leadership role in the health and safety program might include:

- hazard assessment and control
- workplace inspections
- incident investigation

Certifying Partners provide this kind of training, along with other health and safety courses. For more information, go to <http://employment.alberta.ca/cps/rde/xchg/hre/hs.xsl/337.html>.

A health and safety program starts with a policy and procedures document, which declares your commitment to health and safety and describes the roles and responsibilities of the:

- board
- superintendent (or equivalent)
- principals and other senior workers, supervisors and managers
- workers

You can find a sample health and safety policy and description of responsibilities in Appendix 1.

As the school year starts, new workers and those who have moved into new roles or areas will need a health and safety orientation. In addition, all staff can always use a refresher that focuses on where they are now working. *For more information about worker orientation and training, please refer to Section 4 of the Schoolkit.*

School authorities

1. Communicate your system's commitment to health and safety and make sure everyone knows about it.
2. Establish who is responsible for co-ordinating the various health and safety activities within your school system and ensure they have the support and training to do these activities.
3. Develop (or update) your health and safety policy and procedures document.
4. Post a copy of the policy and procedures document in a public place at each work site, including each school, central office, bus barn and maintenance area.
5. Advise all school and system administrators that they can find a copy of the occupational health and safety legislation at:
<http://employment.alberta.ca/cps/rde/xchg/hre/hs.xsl/295.html>.
6. Advise all school and system administrators where to find your school authority forms and checklists.

School and system administrators

1. Establish a health and safety filing system where you can keep copies of all completed health and safety documentation.
2. Make sure you have the necessary forms. Use the appendices in this document to develop your own forms.
3. Ensure new workers and those changing jobs have received a health and safety orientation. *See Appendix 11 for a sample employee health and safety orientation checklist.*
4. Determine who has current first aid training. Make sure you have enough people trained in first aid and let your staff know who they are. *See Section 6 for more information on training.*
5. Inform workers of the location of first aid and other emergency response equipment, such as fire extinguishers.
6. Establish a process for managing the presence of visitors and contractors at each work site.
7. Inform workers of the requirement to:
 - a. report hazards or unsafe conditions
 - b. report work-related pain, injury or illness
 - c. refuse unsafe work

8. Make sure those workers who are taking a lead role in the health and safety program have training to:
 - a. inspect the work site
 - b. conduct hazard assessment
 - c. investigate incidents

Your Messages

The following messages should help you communicate your commitment to occupational health and safety:

- I am committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace.
- We all share responsibility for health and safety. Your involvement is critical to the success of our program.
- Work-related injuries and illnesses are predictable and preventable.
- We can and need to make health and safety part of our day-to-day activities.
- Our workplace will meet or exceed all applicable health and safety legislation.
- You have the right to know about workplace hazards and the responsibility to refuse unsafe work.
- You have a duty to report hazards, unsafe conditions and work-related injuries and illnesses.

Leadership Matters

School systems can be stressful workplaces. While most literature puts the onus on individuals, showing them how to manage their own stress, system and school administrators can reduce everyone's stress load.

The Frazzled Teacher's Wellness Plan by J. Allen Queen and Patsy S. Queen (Cowin Press 2004) discusses the role of school leaders and gives a list of planning techniques that principals can use to reduce teacher stress.

The list includes:

- Sharing information through newsletters and notice boards – not through more meetings
- Scheduling occasional duty-free lunch periods
- Organizing a first-year teachers' support group
- Minimizing classroom disruption of all kinds
- Planning workday social activities that build morale
- Acknowledging individuals with sincere statements of appreciation
- Banning negative talk in the teachers' lounge

October-November

Assessing Hazards

A hazard is anything that can lead to injury or illness. It can be immediate or develop over time.

Different jobs bring different hazards. Language Arts teachers face different hazards than maintenance crews do. Shop teachers face a unique set of hazards, as do office staff.

Hazards can be physical, chemical, biological, ergonomic or psychosocial. The school environment presents a full range of hazards, from the chemical or biological hazards found in science rooms to the psychosocial stresses that come with a demanding profession. *See the chart on page 16 for examples of these hazards.*

A key part of the health and safety program involves identifying hazards, so we can take the next step, which is to eliminate or control them.

Workplace Health and Safety has developed an e-learning tool to help workers and employers assess hazards. This tool may help you complete your hazard assessments. To review the tool, go to:

<http://employment.alberta.ca/whs/learning/hazard/Hazard.htm>

In 2006, Alberta Education published *Safety in the Science Classroom*. You can find it online at:

www.education.gov.ab.ca/K_12/curriculum/bySubject/science.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of *Safety in the Science Classroom* discuss the specific science classroom hazards—biological, mechanical, electrical, sound, rocketry, heat and radiation hazards, along with other hazards associated with equipment and scientific techniques.

You can also find resources for hazard assessment and control from Alberta Corporate Human Resources at:

<http://www.chr.alberta.ca/Practitioners/DocList401.cfm>

STEP 1

The first step is to group workers according to the jobs they do. For example, you may have a custodial and maintenance group, an administrative assistant group and different groups of specialist teachers. You may want to use your organizational chart or staff listing to help identify different work groups. *See Appendices 3 and 4 for sample organizational charts.*

STEP 2

The second step is to identify the tasks for each work group or position. As examples, we start the hazard identification process for a:

- custodian
- kindergarten teacher
- science teacher

STEP 1	STEP 2
Group workers according to their jobs	Identify each group's tasks (partial list provided)
1. Custodian	a) Maintain floors b) Remove garbage and recyclables c) Clean up hazardous spills d) Change and replace lights and ceiling tiles
2. Kindergarten Teacher	a) Update curriculum b) Prepare classroom materials and displays c) Deliver lesson plans
3. Science Teacher	a) Prepare chemical solutions and dispense b) Demonstrate and provide instruction c) Deliver safety instructions and monitor students

STEP 3

The third step is to identify the hazards associated with each group's tasks.

STEP 1 Group workers according to their jobs	STEP 2 Identify each group's tasks (Partial list provided)	STEP 3 Identify the hazards associated with each group's tasks (Partial list provided)
1. Custodian	a) Maintain floors	Chemical exposure to cleaning products, such as strippers, waxes, dust, carbon monoxide from propane machines and asbestos Slips and falls on wet floors Noise and electrical hazards from equipment Physical injury from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • moving heavy items • awkward postures (pushing, pulling, bending wrists) • lifting water buckets improperly • maintaining machines
2. Kindergarten Teacher	a) Update curriculum	Use of computers, Internet and other resources Stress and fatigue from preparing lessons at home or work alone after hours Eye, neck, shoulder, arm and wrist strain from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prolonged sitting • repetitive motions • awkward postures • poorly designed furniture and workstations Transport bags and boxes of materials from home, vehicles, storage rooms and so on, by hand or cart
3. Science Teacher	a) Prepare chemicals	Acute and chronic exposure to chemicals, solutions and dispense solutions and wastes (acids, bases, solvents, flammables, compressed gases) Cuts from glassware, dissection tools, etc.

STEP 4

The final consideration when assessing hazards is to prioritize them according to:

- the likelihood of something going wrong
- the severity of the injuries if it does go wrong

The following guidelines can help you prioritize the identified hazards.

Probability	Definition
1. <i>Not Likely</i>	Unlikely to happen
2. <i>Occasional</i>	Likely to happen once every one to five years
3. <i>Probable</i>	Expected to happen often (once a year or more)

Severity	Definition
1. <i>Marginal</i>	Minor injury or illness which requires some medical aid but does not result in lost time
2. <i>Critical</i>	Lost-time injury
3. <i>Catastrophic</i>	Serious injury or illness, which results in permanent disability, death or extensive property damage

For each hazard, determine the probability that a hazard could occur, then determine the severity of the potential hazard. Consider all the factors that contribute to the degree of risk:

- work environment (layout, conditions, etc.)
- worker's capability, skill and experience
- work systems
- range of foreseeable conditions

Hazards that could result in critical or catastrophic injuries or illnesses become your number one priority.

STEP 1 Group workers according to their jobs	STEP 2 Identify each group's tasks (Partial list provided)	STEP 3 Identify the hazards associated with each group's tasks <i>Hazard Sources/Types</i>	STEP 4 Assess Risk/Prioritize	
			<i>Probability</i>	<i>Severity</i>
1. Custodian	a) Maintain floors	Chemical exposure to cleaning products, such as strippers, waxes, dust, carbon monoxide from propane machines and asbestos	<i>Probable:</i> Workers will probably be exposed to chemicals	<i>Critical:</i> The exposure could cause lost-time injuries (For example, it could put a worker in the hospital or injure a person so they could not return to work the next day.)
			This would be a high-priority hazard which needs control.	

In addition to conducting proactive hazard assessments, encourage workers to report hazards they discover during their work.

You can find a summary of the hazard assessment and control process in Appendix 2.

Things to do

School authorities

1. Remind school and system administrators that:
 - a. occupational health and safety is important
 - b. hazard assessment is the first step in controlling hazards and preventing injuries and incidents
 - c. each school or work site should have access to training in workplace hazard assessment and control
 - d. each school and work site must assess the hazards to all workers
2. Ensure hazard assessments are submitted to the appropriate contact, and the system office reviews the assessments.

School and system administrators

1. Identify groups of workers who are performing similar functions.
2. Using sample templates, review or develop a hazard assessment form for each group of workers. *See Appendices 7 and 8 for sample forms.*
3. Conduct or update hazard assessments for each group of workers.
4. Ask workers to participate if possible. If they can't, at least share the results with them.
5. Keep copies of current hazard assessments in the documentation binder.
6. Make sure that workers know how to report any hazards that they come across.

Your Messages

The following messages should help you communicate the importance of identifying hazards:

- We need to assess our work sites to determine what hazards exist, so we can control those hazards.
- Work sites contain many different types of hazards. They can be physical, ergonomic, chemical, biological and psychosocial.
- Once we identify the hazards, we can plan ways to control them and prevent incidents and injuries.
- Hazards evolve and change, and we must review hazard assessments every year and update them if necessary.

Sample Workplace Hazards

Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Tripping hazards (For example, cables across the floor and poorly maintained floors, driveways and walkways)› Electricity, including poor wiring, frayed cords› Falls from elevated platforms, roofs› Excess noise (For example, in shop or music rooms or from hand tools or compressors)› Extreme temperatures› Fire› Falls from ladders› Moving machine parts› Poor housekeeping and clutter in storage areas› Pressurized systems, such as vessels and boilers› Vehicles, including forklift trucks, trucks, pavers› Radiation exposure (ionizing and non-ionizing). (For example, radiation from the sun or microwave oven)
Chemical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Dusts and fibres (For example, wood dust in carpentry shops, asbestos from a removal project)› Fumes (For example, from welding or soldering)› Gases, including compressed oxygen, nitrogen, natural gas› Liquids, including battery acids, solvents, cleaners› Mists and vapours (For example, from metal working liquids, pesticides, spray painting operations)
Biological	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Viruses, bacteria moulds, fungi, etc. found in blood and body fluids, food, sewage and contaminated building materials
Ergonomic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Awkward postures› Repetitive motions› Voice strain› Poor lighting. (For example, poorly lighted workstations which cause eye strain and headaches)› Vibration from hand tools
Psychosocial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Stress› Fatigue› Working conditions› Workplace violence› Impairment› Incivility

December-January

Controlling Hazards

After completing Section 2, you will have a collection of completed hazard assessments, which describe workplace hazards for each area and group of workers. Ideally we would like to eliminate every hazard. However that isn't always possible. Teaching biology and chemistry involves handling potentially dangerous substances. Maintaining a school involves working on roofs and in confined spaces. At times many of us may need to work alone.

When we can't eliminate a hazard, we try to control it and reduce the risk to an acceptable level. There are several ways to do this. For example we can use engineering controls:

- a trolley to move materials
- a fume hood for chemistry experiments
- guards to cover pinch points on machinery

We can also use administrative controls:

- train workers to use the equipment safely
- use protocols and procedures to describe how to manage a hazardous situation
- vary tasks and limit the time any worker spends on highly repetitive tasks to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injuries

Finally we can use personal protective equipment, such as safety glasses, respirators or gloves, to reduce the risk and severity of an injury. When we use personal protective equipment, we need to make sure the equipment is well maintained, right for the hazard and fits the worker.

Workers need to:

- know how to control the hazards properly
- understand that they must use the controls (It's not an option, and there are consequences for not following the rules)

You can find examples of the different types of controls on *page 20*. *Samples of completed hazard assessment and control forms are found in Appendices 7 and 8*. These forms show how to identify, prioritize and control hazards.

Breaking the Chain

The flu is a biological hazard that we often simply accept. We think it is part of nature and part of working in a school. However, identifying the flu as potential hazard helps us find ways to control it.

As an employer, you can encourage staff to get a flu shot, and you can make the process easy by paying for shots and arranging for workers to receive them at the work site.

During flu season, workers can also help control the hazard, by:

- Staying at least one metre from students and other workers whenever possible, especially when students and co-workers are coughing and sneezing
- Limiting equipment sharing with co-workers and students. Keep your pens and art supplies to yourself
- Wiping hard surfaces, supplies and equipment daily (regular household cleaners are sufficient)
- Washing hands frequently, and always after coughing, sneezing or using a tissue
- Thinking before touching your mouth, eyes and nose, so viruses don't spread from your hands
- Throwing away used tissues
- Covering your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing
- Sneezing and coughing into the crook of your elbow, when you don't have a tissue

Things to do

School authorities

1. Remind school and system administrators that:
 - a. schools have a responsibility to eliminate or control hazards
 - b. supervisors are responsible for ensuring that workers use hazard controls, and workers are responsible for using these controls
2. Ensure that each school and work site documents the hazard controls identified in the assessment and then submits a copy to the system office.

School and system administrators

1. Discuss the types of hazard controls with supervisors and workers.
2. Ask each supervisor to work with staff to:
 - a. determine which controls would eliminate or best control the identified hazards
 - b. develop a job procedure for any job that isn't adequately controlled through other means
3. Ensure hazard controls are implemented.

Your Messages

The following messages should help you communicate the importance of controlling hazards:

- Engineering controls, administrative controls and personal protective equipment help us control hazards.
- We all have a responsibility to use the hazard controls.
- If you think a control won't work, you have an obligation to talk to your supervisor.

Eliminating and Controlling Hazards (listed in order of preference)

Elimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Eliminate the need to perform the hazardous task. For example, a library could install Radio Frequency Identification, a wireless scanning system that eliminates the repetitive motion of handling each book and scanning each barcode.
Engineering controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Substitute it with something safer. For example, use a less toxic chemical or smaller packages to reduce the weight of items that have to be manually handled.› Isolate the hazard. For example:<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ soundproof barriers to reduce noise levels■ create an enclosed spray booth for spray painting■ use remote control systems to operate machinery› Use trolleys or hoists to move heavy loads› Place guards around moving parts of machinery› Provide local exhaust ventilation (e.g. a fume hood or exhaust hose)
Administrative controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Safe work procedures› Training and supervision for workers› Regular maintenance of machinery and equipment› Job rotation to reduce exposures› Keeping minimum quantities of chemicals on site
Personal Protective Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Hard hats› Respirators› Gloves› Ear plugs› Goggles or glasses› Footwear
A combination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› For example, in a swimming pool chlorine room we would use:<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ ventilation to remove chlorine gas■ procedures to follow when entering the room■ personal protective equipment, such as a respirator, gloves, apron

February-March *OHS Orientation and Training*

Worker orientation and training are an essential part of an effective health and safety program. On the first day of work before they start the job, new workers must learn critical information. Within the first week, they should receive a full health and safety orientation. Workers who deal with any type of hazard must receive training in proper practices and procedures before performing the tasks.

Workers who change jobs need the same orientation and training. They may know the work site, but they are still new to the job.

When a job contains hazards, we must ensure that each worker is competent. OHS legislation states that a competent worker is “adequately qualified, suitably trained and with sufficient experience to safely perform work without supervision or with only a minimum degree of supervision.”

A competent worker has the qualifications, training and experience to do a specific job. A different job will require different competencies. While orientation is general, training is specific to each job. If you are working on a roof, you need to understand the specific hazards and safety procedures. If you are working in a classroom or office, you need to understand those hazards and procedures.

As you start a training program, you need a clear idea of the competencies required for each job. Training needs to be consistent so that everyone doing a job is doing it to the same standards.

School authorities

1. Communicate the importance of health and safety training to system and school administrators. Make sure they understand that any worker who does hazardous work must have adequate qualifications, training and experience.
2. Inform system and school administrators where staff can receive training.
3. Develop a training budget and schedule so all workers will have the ability to develop the competencies they need to do their jobs safely.

School and system administrators

1. Develop an employee health and safety orientation checklist. *See Appendix 11 for a sample checklist.*
2. Develop a competency list for each job category. The hazard assessments could be useful in this process.
3. Determine who has training and who needs training.
4. Ask employees to identify any additional health and safety training they may need.
5. Ask each supervisor to develop a health and safety orientation for his or her area.
6. Ask each supervisor to make sure each staff member gets the training needed to be competent.
7. Determine if anyone at the work site needs specialized training such as Transportation of Dangerous Goods (TDG) training. Workers who ship, transport or receive dangerous goods should have TDG training and renew their certificates every three years.
8. Determine who needs Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) training. Workers (for example custodial, science and CTS teachers) who work with controlled chemical products require WHMIS training.
9. Keep copies of the training records in the occupational health and safety file.
10. Keep track of training courses that require re-certification (e.g. TDG and First Aid).

Your Messages

The following messages should help you communicate the importance of occupational health and safety training:

- The *Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Act, Regulation and Code* and our system-wide policy and procedures set specific training requirements.
- With education and training, we can keep our workplace safe.
- We must constantly renew and update our training.
- We all need the competencies to do our job safely.

April-May

Inspecting the Workplace

Within the school system, an occupational health and safety program focuses on all work sites—not just the classroom. The entire operation must be healthy and safe.

In Section 2, we looked at different jobs and tasks and tried to identify the hazards for each job. Another important aspect of a health and safety program is inspections. We need to take physical tours to inspect the work site and look at how we do our work. Much like the scheduled maintenance of a vehicle, inspections are routine checks which alert us to potential problems and allow us to spot unsafe conditions and hazards that could lead to injury or illness.

Inspections must be routine and ongoing. How often you inspect depends on the number of potentially acute hazards in the work area. The important thing is to schedule a regular time to complete inspections. For example, you could plan to inspect shop classrooms or science labs every day. Make it a routine and involve students in the inspection. Mechanical rooms or maintenance areas may need monthly inspections, while administrative areas may only need inspections twice a year.

Inspections give us an opportunity to talk to workers and get their input. Inspections work best when they are part of a team effort, which involves the person who works in the area most of the time, a supervisor and someone from outside the area. Team inspections are more complete, because they bring different perspectives. They can also help open lines of communication. You get to know the work site, and workers connect with administrators.

Document these inspections, follow-up and track the completion of action items. *Appendix 12 contains a sample inspection form.*

Things to do

School authorities

1. Develop an inspection checklist (You may want different checklists for different areas). *See Appendix 12 for a sample.*
2. Provide the checklists to all work sites and schools.
3. Remind school and system administrators of the importance of regular work site inspections.
4. Have copies of completed inspection reports submitted to the authority office.

School and system administrators

1. At a staff meeting, ask someone trained in workplace inspections to provide a brief overview of the inspection process.
2. Plan an inspection schedule with staff. Inspect all areas of the school or work site at least twice per year.
3. Take part in inspections, if possible.
4. Ensure the inspections are completed according to your schedule.
5. Review and sign off inspection reports and communicate the results, along with appropriate recognition, recommendations and follow-up actions, to all workers.
6. Keep a copy of all inspection reports in the health and safety file, and submit copies to the school authority office.

Your Messages

The following messages should help you communicate the importance of inspecting the work site:

- Everyone in the school system is a worker and faces occupational health and safety hazards.
- Inspections help us identify what is working well, as well as what needs to change.
- We are all responsible to participate in regular work site inspections.
- Inspections are an opportunity to build teams and open lines of communication.
- Inspections help create a culture of safety.

June

Planning for Emergencies and Incidents

Emergency Response Planning

As your health and safety program strengthens, your school system will see fewer emergencies and incidents. When an emergency does occur, your ability to respond quickly and appropriately will lessen the impact.

Most schools have model emergency response plans for students. Regular fire drills are one example of how schools identify a possible emergency, put a plan in place and then test the plan. A health and safety program addresses response plans for all potential emergencies.

All work sites, including central offices and maintenance areas, must have an emergency response plan for each potential emergency. The plan would describe the necessary steps and who is responsible for each step. In an emergency, the first step is to treat injuries, and your emergency response plan should describe how to respond to injured workers who may require anything from first aid to off-site treatment.

Steps in Emergency Response Planning:

- Identify possible types of emergencies
- Develop a plan to deal with each type
- Provide training (the level of training will depend on the person's role – floor warden training will be different than training for general staff and students)
- Purchase the necessary equipment, including first aid supplies
- Test the plans (e.g. drills)
- Debrief and modify the plans as needed

Types of Emergencies:

Facility: power outages, fires, water line breaks, etc.

Natural and man-made disasters: tornadoes, winter storms, train derailments, etc.

Medical emergency: work-related or student injury, illness, etc.

Violence and threats of violence: bomb threats, intruders, co-worker or student violence, etc.

Incident Investigation

An incident is anything that was not supposed to happen. It might have resulted in an injury or damage, or you might have been lucky and only had a “near miss.”

Section 2 (October and November) discussed hazard assessment. An incident investigation is a hazard assessment that takes place *after* an injury or illness has occurred.

Once the emergency is taken care of, plan to investigate the incident. Investigations involve identifying the actual hazards and answering when, why and how the incident occurred. The purpose is not to assign blame. We want to determine all the causes and identify all the hazards, so we can control or eliminate them and prevent future incidents or emergencies.

The following types of incidents need a complete investigation:

- incidents that result in (or could result in) injuries that require medical aid
- incidents that cause (or could cause) property damage or interrupt any operation or activity
- incidents that must be reported to the WCB, Occupational Health and Safety or other regulatory agency

Your health and safety program should include an incident investigation process. Incident investigation is a skill, and those individuals who have a lead role in your health and safety program should receive specific incident investigation training. All workers must know the procedures for reporting incidents, and those trained in incident investigation will take the lead in conducting the investigation.

The Appendices contain several forms:

Appendix 13–Incident Report Form (This simple form is completed by anyone involved in an incident.)

Appendix 14–Incident Investigation Form (Completed for more serious incidents. The person completing the investigation should receive training.)

Appendix 15–Witness Statement (Completed by anyone who saw or has useful information about the incident.)

Appendix 16–First Aid Form

Appendices 17 and 18–WCB Forms

Things to do

School authorities

1. Determine the potential emergencies and develop or update emergency plans for each situation.
2. Provide copies of the plans to all district schools and work sites.
3. Ensure your health and safety policy includes incident investigation procedures.
4. Remind school administrators of the importance of incident investigation and follow-up.

School and system administrators

1. Develop or update your emergency plans, so they are ready for the next school year.
2. Make sure your workplace has an appropriate number of workers trained in first aid.
3. Make sure your workplace has an appropriate number of workers trained in incident investigation.
4. Make sure you have adequate first aid supplies.
5. Appoint a person to create and look after a confidential First Aid Records filing system. Keep records for at least three years.
6. Review your first aid and injury response procedures.
7. Review your incident investigation procedures.
8. Schedule fire and security alert drills to test the emergency response plan.
9. Set up a logbook to keep track of all emergency drills and actual response situations.

Your Messages

The following messages should help you communicate the importance of planning for emergencies and incidents.

- We must have appropriate first aid supplies and workers trained in first aid.
- Workers need to report all incidents—no matter how minor.
- We must be prepared to respond to an emergency—from providing first aid to locking down.
- Supervisors must immediately record every work-related illness or injury on the First Aid Report form (these records are to be kept confidential).
- We must immediately report all serious injuries to Workplace Health and Safety and the WCB or other insurer.
- We investigate incidents not to lay blame, but to prevent recurrences.

Beyond Year One

This *Schoolkit* has taken you through the school year, prompting you to take a systematic approach to introducing an occupational health and safety program.

Year Two could look very similar to your first year. Remember that each new year brings new staff. Although you are familiar with health and safety procedures, for many workers this is a new work site with many unknowns. Returning staff can also deepen their health and safety understanding. The goal is that everyone within your organization continues to increase his or her understanding of occupational health and safety.

Begin every school year by:

- renewing and reinforcing your commitment to a healthy and safe workplace
- assessing each work site's orientation and training needs

Use October and November to reassess the hazards. Look for new hazards that have entered the work site. Review your hazard controls during December and January. This is a good time to pull out the hazard assessments and:

- determine whether the controls are effective
- update safety procedures as necessary
- review the controls and procedures with workers during health and safety meetings

In February and March, evaluate your progress and examine your budget to make sure you have the resources for next year's training and other health and safety needs. In the spring, review your inspection schedule and your emergency, first aid and incident investigation procedures.

Possible next steps:

- track statistics (WCB or other insurance) for work-related injuries and look for trends
- develop a process for managing contractor health and safety
- develop a joint health and safety committee
- work towards obtaining a Certificate of Recognition (go to <http://employment.alberta.ca/cps/rde/xchg/hre/hs.xsl/277.html> for more information about CORs)
- incorporate health and safety into other systems, for example:
 - transportation and bussing
 - field trips
 - professional development
 - facility environment issues (e.g. air quality, mould, asbestos, etc.)

Glossary

Accident. An unplanned, unfortunate event that results in damage or injury. The term ‘accident’ suggests these events are out of our control. However, these events are only out of control, because we have failed to introduce proper training, inspections, procedures and hazard controls. A more appropriate term is “incident.”

Administrative control. Policies, procedures, safe work practices and training that manage how workers work around hazards. This control method reduces the likelihood and severity of worker injury, but does not eliminate or physically control the hazard. Examples of administrative controls include:

- rotating workers during severe weather conditions
- planning job procedures for jobs which have special hazards
- purchasing tools with safety features
- purchasing less toxic products, etc.

Certifying partner: A designation given to organizations that can assess the quality of health and safety programs and issue Certificates of Recognition (COR).

Certificate of recognition (COR). A certificate which recognizes that an independent auditor has evaluated your health and safety management system and found that it meets a minimum standard. Employers who achieve and maintain valid COR can earn a financial incentive through the Workers’ Compensation Board’s (WCB) Partners in Injury Reduction (PIR) program. The PIR program is a joint effort between WCB, Workplace Health and Safety and industry partners.

Your health and safety management system should:

- clearly state your policy and management commitment
- identify and analyze work site health and safety hazards
- establish controls that eliminate or reduce the risks from these hazards
- include a work site inspection program
- address worker competency and training
- include emergency response planning, incident investigation and program administration

Disabling injury. Any injury that prevents workers from performing their regular duties. A disabling injury may or may not be a lost-time claim.

Due diligence. The level of judgement, care, prudence, determination and activity that would reasonably be expected under particular circumstances. Applied to occupational health and safety, due diligence means that employers shall take all reasonable precautions to prevent injuries or incidents in the workplace. To exercise due diligence, an employer must implement a plan to identify possible workplace hazards and carry out the appropriate corrective action to prevent incidents or injuries arising from these hazards.

Employees. Any worker, including district workers, temporary workers, volunteers, contracted workers and subcontractors present at the work site.

Employer. Any person who employs one or more workers. Within every Alberta school system, the employer is the school board. The employer can designate a representative, who then acts on the employer's behalf. Section 61 of the *Alberta School Act* allows school boards to delegate authority to a superintendent. The superintendent is the school system's CEO and represents his or her employer. The board also appoints principals, who are responsible for managing the schools.

Engineering control. Provides the highest degree of worker protection, because it eliminates or controls the hazard at its source. Engineering controls are the preferred method for eliminating or controlling hazards. Some examples of engineering controls are:

- installing guards around moving parts
- rollover protection (ROPS) for heavy equipment (e.g. forklift truck)
- providing ventilation equipment to remove toxic vapours

Hazard. Any situation, condition or thing that may endanger the safety or health of workers. A hazard has the potential to cause an injury, illness or loss.

Hazard assessment. A process that looks at what could cause harm to workers at a work site and determines what controls could eliminate or reduce the hazard risk. Formal assessments should occur within each department or when you change a method of operation. An Incident Investigation Report might also make a formal hazard assessment necessary.

Health and safety management system. A process that minimizes the incidence of injury and illness to workers. The process involves identifying, assessing and controlling hazards to workers in all workplace operations. The scope and complexity of a health and safety management system will vary according to the type of workplace and the nature of operations carried out.

Imminent danger. A danger that is not normally present in a job or any dangerous condition that a worker would not normally perform his work in. Workers must refuse to do any jobs they believe would put themselves or co-workers in imminent danger.

Incident. Any unplanned, undesirable event, which resulted in, or could have resulted in, harm to people and damage to equipment or property. The term "incident" is used in a broad sense to include accidents and near incidents.

Incident investigation. The process of systematically gathering and analyzing information about an incident. This is done for the purpose of identifying causes and making recommendations to prevent recurrence. Incident investigations are also done to meet any regulatory requirements regarding incident investigation, report writing or record keeping.

Inspections. A process to observe workplace conditions and activities, and to monitor the effectiveness of hazard controls. Inspections should be documented and completed on a regular basis.

Job procedures. A form of administrative control. Written, step-by-step instructions of how to do a job from start to finish. Job procedures are often used to train new workers and workers who have moved to new jobs. Workers also refer to job procedures when doing complex, unusually hazardous or unfamiliar jobs. A job procedure contains the appropriate safe work practices and highlights safety points.

Joint Health and Safety Committee: Also known as the industrial health and safety committee, joint work site health and safety committee, occupational health committee, workplace safety and health committee or health and safety committee. Consists of labour and management representatives who meet on a regular basis to deal with health and safety issues. Labour representatives bring an in-depth practical knowledge of specific tasks, while management brings a larger overview of company policies and procedures.

Lost-time injury incident. Any incident that disables the worker and results in the worker being absent from work for more than the day of the incident.

Medical aid injury incident. Injury that required medical attention, but allows the injured person to return to the job on the same day of injury.

Minor injury incident. Any injury, even injuries that do not require first aid and do not result in absence from work.

Near miss incident. An incident that could have resulted in an injury, illness or damage, but did not.

Occupational Health and Safety policy. A document that declares your commitment to health and safety and describes everyone's health and safety roles and responsibilities. A health and safety policy is a management statement and not part of your legal school board educational policies.

Personal protective equipment (PPE). Equipment or clothing worn to protect workers from occupational health and safety hazards. As a last resort, workers may need to use PPE to reduce the potentially harmful effects of exposure to a known hazard. PPE is not a substitute for other controls. Rather, it should supplement engineering and administrative controls.

Safe work practices. An administrative control that describes a general way of controlling a hazard. Safe work practices are ways of controlling hazards and doing jobs with a minimum of risk to people and property. For example, you may have a stepladder practice that involves never going on the top two rungs.

Psychosocial hazards. The hazards that affect us psychologically and emotionally and occur between people. Harassment and stress are examples of psychosocial hazards.

Reasonably practicable. Doing everything you can to prevent injury or harm. When you are being reasonably practicable, you are considering how much we know about the risks. It is not reasonable to expect an employer to take steps to prevent hazards that, at the time of an injury, were unknown. If science and industry are not aware of a potential risk, we cannot be expected to be aware of those risks. Reasonably practicable also implies that there is some known way to prevent or control the hazard and that it is financially feasible and would not put the organization out of business. See also **Due diligence**.

School and system administrators. All the individuals who manage the school. These include principals, vice principals, facilities and human resource managers.

Task. A set of related steps that make up a discrete part of a job. Every job is a collection of tasks. For example, answering a phone or entering data into a computer are tasks of an administrative job.

Work site. Any location where workers do their job. Buildings, grounds and vehicles are all examples of work sites.

Workers' Compensation Board. Workers' compensation is a disability insurance system set up under the Alberta *Workers' Compensation Act* that protects both employers and workers against the impact of work injuries. It compensates injured workers for lost income, health care and other costs related to a work related injury. It protects employers from being sued by workers if they are injured on the job. This system brings stability and protection to the workplace by providing coverage at a cost shared by all employers. It also protects employers and workers against the risks and expenses of injury and the uncertainties of litigation. Some school employees are covered by the WCB; while others are covered by another insurance agency, such as the Alberta School Employee Benefits Plan.