

## GETTING STARTED ON SAFETY: A HOW-TO GUIDE FOR YOUR SMALL BUSINESS



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# Introduction

## About the Guide

Workplace injuries and illnesses can be prevented. Attention to health and safety is not just about obeying the law and being socially responsible, it **makes good business sense**.

The guide has been developed with small business owners like you in mind. It provides an easy-to-follow, six-step plan for creating a health and safety program. The information presented here is not meant to be all-encompassing but it provides a foundation on which you can build.

Just like any other part of your business, safety has to be managed. Someone in your organization needs to champion safety, and everyone needs to be involved.

### **This guide will help you:**

- Get your safety program started
- Meet the requirements of the law
- Reduce costs due to injury and illness at your workplace
- Identify and prioritize opportunities for improvement for your workplace
- Find specific health and safety information relevant to your business

**The tools and checklists mentioned in this guide can be found at [wsps.ca/SmallBusiness](http://wsps.ca/SmallBusiness). More tools are being added all the time so check back regularly.**

# Start Here



**You may not have seen many workplace injuries but they are a big deal in Ontario. Over 190,000 injury claims are filed every year with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. That is more than 540 claims every day in Ontario alone!**

As a small business it is important to remember that a severe injury or illness could shut your doors. Following the steps below will help you reduce your risks and improve your company's bottom line.

There are specific legal requirements around health and safety for workers and employers that you need to know before we get started. Some of this information is hard to interpret so that is why we have this guide.

The primary legislation that covers health and safety in the workplace is called the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)*. This legislation sets out the roles, responsibilities, legal authority and general principles for the workplace parties such as employers, supervisors, workers and inspectors. If you wanted to find out what your responsibilities are as an employer with regard to health and safety, this is where you would look.

The Ministry of Labour (MOL) is the government ministry that enforces and administers this legislation.

The Regulations are specific rules which include very exact requirements for individual sectors, and detailed situations. For example, there are detailed regulations for

## Penalties

The MOL has the power to issue work orders, tickets and press charges for non-compliance.

Convictions for contraventions of the *OHSA* or Regulation can lead to fines and jail sentences.

- The maximum fine for an individual is \$25,000 (per contravention)
- The maximum fine for a corporation is \$500,000 (per contravention)

Convictions of an individual could result in up to 12 months in prison.



industrial establishments (Reg. 851). There are also regulations for construction work (Reg. 213) and the agricultural sector (Reg. 414). If you wanted to find out what the detailed requirements are for a guard on a machine in a factory, you would check the industrial regulations (Section 24 to 44).

If you hire workers (including family members), or are an independent operator in construction, you must register with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) unless you meet specific exemptions (see [wsib.on.ca](http://wsib.on.ca)). Workplace safety and insurance is a no-fault insurance system for work-related injuries and diseases. It is governed by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 (WSIA), and is managed by the WSIB.

Other Acts and regulations may also impact your work. For example, the Building Code sets the minimum requirements for building design such as the requirements for fire doors. The Highway Traffic Act sets requirements for things like seat belt use and using hand-held devices.

**You can purchase the OHSA and regulations from WSPS or Service Ontario publications. Alternatively you can view the most up-to-date version at [e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://e-laws.gov.on.ca).**



## STEP 1:

# Get It



## You need to get the “stuff” you require to get your health and safety program up and running.

A good first step is to set up a bulletin board in an area where all workers will pass by, such as the entrance hall way or the lunch room. The Health and Safety Starter Kit available from WSPS provides almost everything you need (see [wsp.ca](http://wsp.ca)). Included in the Kit are official print versions of most of the mandatory material for posting in Ontario workplaces, as well as, additional complementary resources.

The specific items you will need to have posted on a bulletin board where everyone can see them so that everyone knows their responsibilities and rights, are listed below:

- *Occupational Health and Safety Act*
- Regulation 851, Industrial Establishments
- Regulation 414, Farming Operations (if applicable)
- MOL Employment Standards Act (ESA) Poster
- MOL “Health and Safety at Work: Prevention Starts Here” Poster
- Your Company’s Health and Safety Policy
- Your Company’s Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy
- Regulation 860, WHMIS
- Designated Substances Information\*
- Occupational Health and Safety Explanatory materials, such as the MOL Guide to the *OHS*A
- WSIB Form 82 - “In Case of Injury at Work” Poster
- Regulation 1101, First Aid
- Emergency Services and Numbers (e.g.: 911 or fire, police, ambulance; MOL; utilities; internal contact numbers)



### Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)

As the employer, you need to ensure that you:

- Provide WHMIS training
- Maintain up-to-date Safety Data Sheets (Get these from suppliers and manufacturers) and make them accessible to employees
- Ensure hazardous substances are properly labeled

\*Designated substances are substances which have been designated as hazardous by the MOL. They include: acrylonitrile, arsenic, asbestos, benzene, coke oven emissions, ethylene oxide, isocyanates, lead mercury, silica and vinyl chloride.

Applicable Reports including:

- Health and/or safety assessments/surveys
- MOL orders
- Other information applicable to the workplace
  - e.g.: Transportation of Dangerous Goods, MOL Guidelines, MOL Alerts

**If you have 20 or more employees or workers that may be exposed to designated substances (see designated substances below), you will also need to post the:**

- Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) workplace health and safety inspection records
- JHSC Member names and work locations

The *OHSA* requires that workplaces with **six or more employees** have a written health and safety policy, and develop and maintain a program to implement that policy. If you do get a visit from the MOL, the health and safety policy is one of the first things they will look for.

The Policy must be created by the employer, reviewed every year, dated and posted in a location conspicuous to employees such as a lunchroom or entrance.

A workplace violence and harassment policy must also be created. This policy can be part of your health and safety policy or a separate document. Like the health and safety policy, it must be dated, reviewed annually and posted in a location conspicuous to employees.

You will also need a First Aid kit. The type of First Aid kit you will need will depend on how many workers are on site. See the First Aid regulation 1101 on our small business site [wsp.ca/SmallBusiness](https://www.wsp.ca/SmallBusiness).

An eyewash station will also be required if there is the potential for eye injury because of the type of work you do.

The damage and downtime resulting from even a small fire can destroy your company's ability to remain in business. An emergency fire plan is a legal requirement – you'll need to consult the Ontario Fire Code for your specific requirements. Consider contacting your local fire department for support in developing an emergency fire plan for your location. Download "Fire Protection" for more information.

**For the links to the documents and sample checklist, see [wsp.ca/SmallBusiness](https://www.wsp.ca/SmallBusiness).**



### Health and Safety Policy

This is an employer's commitment to workplace health and safety and ultimately, accident and illness prevention. This document is usually a few paragraphs in length and covers the following themes:

- Employer's commitment to providing a healthy and safe workplace
- Employer's commitment to following applicable laws
- Supervisor's responsibility to maintain a safe work environment in their area of control
- Worker's responsibility to follow the program and report hazards



### First Aid Kits

Having First Aid kits and trained staff on hand is vital to reduce the severity of an injury and is a legal requirement for your business. Employees should be aware where First Aid kits are available and what's in them. A checklist to help you ensure you meet the First Aid requirements of Regulation 1101 can be found on our website [wsp.ca/SmallBusiness](https://www.wsp.ca/SmallBusiness).

## Train Your Employees

Getting health and safety training is a legal requirement and is crucial in preventing injuries and illness. Listed below are some of the areas where you need to train your employees:

- Every worker and supervisor in Ontario must receive the health and safety awareness training. Web based and onsite training is readily available and it only takes an hour or two. See [wsps.ca](http://wsps.ca).
- All workers that work with, or in proximity to, a hazardous material require training in the WHMIS.
- Workers that are required to wear or use any protective equipment (for example fall protection or respirators) must be trained in its care and use.
- Workers who may be exposed to a biological, chemical or physical agent that may endanger the worker's safety or health shall be trained.
- Workers that use a nailing gun, work with electricity or use a lifting device such as a crane or forklift must also have specific training.
- Workers that work in confined spaces.
- Workplaces with 20 or more workers must have at least one worker and one management person trained to be certified members of the workplace JHSC.

If your work has specific hazards, make sure all those exposed have all the training they need to stay safe. Hazard and job-specific safety training should be performed at the time of hire, when a significant change occurs, and when workers are transferred or promoted to a new position.

Regular toolbox safety talks and pre-start meetings are a great way to maintain safety awareness and bring attention to any current or emerging hazards and risks.



## STEP 2:

# Do It



## What are the hazards at your workplace? At this stage you will have to do some investigative work, just like a detective.

You need to find out where you can make the biggest difference in preventing injury and illness, and reducing costs.

- Look at your records to find out where you have had injuries or near hits in the past.
- Ask the WSIB for a Workplace Injury and Summary Report (WISR) for your company. It is free. The WISR report shows your company's cumulative injury and illness experience. It also compares your company's experience rating details against your industry sector's average.
- Talk to any industry associations, colleagues, and WSPS to see where the risks are for your company.
- Talk to people in your company that have been around a while about near hits or injuries, and illnesses they have seen or heard about.

It will really help you if you do a hazard assessment. It is important to know what the hazards are in your workplace. Some of the most common workplace hazards in Ontario are listed below:

- a) Workers with awkward posture, exerting too much force or too much repetition in the job leading to a musculoskeletal disorder (MSD)
- b) Driving or moving vehicles
- c) Exposed moving mechanical parts
- d) Slippery or uneven floors
- e) Working at heights (e.g. working on ladders)
- f) Chemicals or dusts
- g) Workplace violence

Controlling the hazards listed above will likely give you a great return on your investment because they account for most of the workplace injuries and fatalities in Ontario.

WSPS has many specific risk assessment checklists to help you look out for the hazards at your company. See the WSPS small business site ([wspss.ca/SmallBusiness](https://wspss.ca/SmallBusiness)) to see risk assessment forms for many of the hazards listed above.

It is important to be extra watchful in identifying hazards when you are doing work which is different than your typical work because your staff will not be aware of the hazards.

Once you recognize and prioritize the hazards you should work on controlling them. The best way to control a hazard is to eliminate it from your workplace. See the “How to Control Hazards” figure.

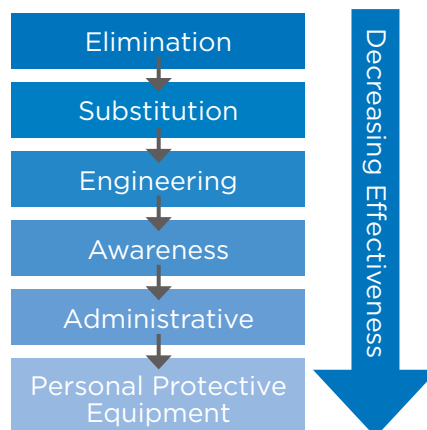
The first three control methods, elimination, substitution, and engineering, are the most effective because they are applied directly to the hazard. The less the control relies on human behavior, the more effective it will be. The bottom three controls, awareness, administrative, and personal protective equipment (PPE), rely on human beings to control the hazard and the actual hazard still exists.

For example, eliminating a hazardous chemical from your process will prevent any injury or illness from the chemical and is the best solution. Requiring workers to use gloves and a respirator does not eliminate the hazard in the workplace and other staff will still be exposed. Using PPE properly takes training and workers may not always use the required PPE because it is uncomfortable or does not look attractive. It’s important that PPE is periodically inspected and maintained. For example, the cartridges on respirators for protection from some chemicals will only provide protection for a short time and will degrade once the package is opened, even if they are not used.

PPE such as fall protection and respirators, must meet certain criteria. Check that yours meets the grade.

Start with one hazard in your workplace and “do it”. You will be surprised with how easy it will be.

## How to Control Hazards



### Personal Protective Equipment

PPE must fit properly and suit the work. Equipment that isn’t worn because it’s uncomfortable or doesn’t allow someone to perform the work properly offers no protection.

### STEP 3:

# Write It Down



**When you are dealing with the legal requirements of health and safety, keep in mind that if it's not written down, then it didn't happen! As far as the law is concerned, you must document your actions.**

You may promote health and safety and diligently keep your employees on track, but, if it is not written down and documented, it is as if never happened in the eyes of the law.

Write or purchase policies (see the Manual Service on [wsps.ca](http://wsps.ca)) and procedures. Document when your procedures are broken and what you did about it. This is an important part of due diligence, which is your primary defense under the *OHSA*.

Make sure you keep records of all safety training as they will be needed if something goes wrong. Also make sure you keep records of all the maintenance done to your equipment and vehicles.

If you have PPE such as fall protection equipment (e.g. harnesses and lanyards) or respirators, make sure you schedule and document regular inspections and maintenance.

If someone is injured, make sure you write down all the circumstances around the incident. WSPS has a simple form you can use to help you perform an investigation. See [wsps.ca/SmallBusiness](http://wsps.ca/SmallBusiness).

Remember, if it was not written down it never occurred, so write it down so that you have the proof.

STEP 4:

# Watch For It



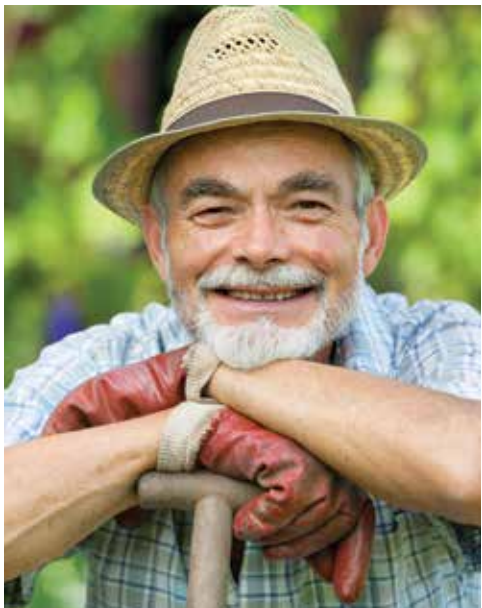
**As a small business owner you should always be on the watch for hazards. Every time you walk around do a visual assessment.**

Writing down your inspection results is a great way to show due diligence. Even after you have controlled a hazard, it is a good idea to evaluate the control a week or two later to ensure it is working and no unforeseen hazards have been created.

A more methodical way to watch for hazards is a workplace inspection. A checklist is a great way to ensure you don't miss anything. Several types of workplace inspection checklists and a workplace inspection form are available on the small business website.

A health and safety representative is your eyes and ears in the workplace to watch for hazards. In workplaces where there are between six and 19 regularly employed workers, the law requires that there is a health and safety representative. If you have 20 or more workers, a JHSC is required. See [wsps.ca](http://wsps.ca) for more information.

As a small business it is important to remember that one severe injury or loss could cost you thousands of dollars so you need to keep watch.





## STEP 5:

# Report It



## If an injury or illness does happen, there are specific steps you should follow.

Reporting to the correct organizations on time will do a lot to show you are on top of things and reduce your costs and paperwork. Good reporting and follow-up can save your company a lot of money in worker's compensations costs.

If someone is injured, the first priority is making the area safe and providing the injured with First Aid.

If medical aid is required, you must make arrangements for the injured worker to be transported for medical treatment. It is a good idea to call 911 if there is any doubt about the severity of the injury. Someone from the company should go with the injured worker to the hospital if an emergency room visit is required.

If medical aid is required, the worker will lose time or the worker is going to be off for more than the day of the injury, an Employer's Report of Injury/Disease Form 7 must be sent to the WSIB within three business days of the worker reporting the injury, or the day you became aware of the injury (whichever is earlier). You may be assessed penalties for not forwarding this form in a timely manner. It is important that you let all your staff know that if they do get medical aid (visit emergency or their Doctor) because of a workplace-related injury, that they let you know immediately because your company may be assessed a workplace injury and you will not even know about it until you hear from the WSIB.

### Employers must report a work-related accident/illness to the WSIB if they learn that a worker requires health care and/or:

- Is absent from regular work
- Earns less than regular pay for regular work (e.g., only working partial hours)
- Requires modified work at less than regular pay

Reporting is also required if, following the date of the work-related accident/illness, the worker does not receive health care but requires modified work at regular pay for more than seven calendar days.

It is very important to follow up with all injuries to ensure the process is working as it should, and the worker returns to work as soon as it is safe to do so.

It is not necessary to complete the WSIB Form 7 for first-aid-only injuries. First aid includes, but is not limited to, cleaning minor cuts, scrapes, scratches, applying bandages and/or dressings and applying splints.

The law requires that you keep a record of all first-aid incidents but they do not have to be reported.

If the injury is a critical injury, the MOL must be called immediately and an investigation must be performed.

When a critical injury or fatality occurs at the workplace, it is important to secure the scene. This means that it is important to leave the scene undisturbed until the MOL or police take charge of the scene or you are told that the scene can be altered. A worker health and safety representative, or worker member of the JHSC, should be involved in the investigation of a critical injury.

**Check out [wsps.ca](http://wsps.ca) or the MOL website for more information.**

**An injury is considered critical when it:**

- places life in jeopardy
- produces unconsciousness
- results in substantial loss of blood
- involves the fracture of a leg or arm but not a finger or toe
- involves the amputation of a leg, arm, hand or foot but not a finger or toe
- consists of burns to a major portion of the body, or
- causes the loss of sight in an eye

STEP 6:

# Find It



## You are not alone!

There is a great deal of information available to help you both online and on the phone. If you wish to know more about health and safety legislation and how it applies to you, refer to the resources below.

To find out more, please visit [wsps.ca/SmallBusiness](http://wsps.ca/SmallBusiness)  
or call 1 877 494 WSPS (9777)

### **Workplace Safety & Prevention Services**

[www.wsps.ca](http://www.wsps.ca)

1-877-494-WSPS (9777)

### **Workplace Safety & Insurance Board**

[www.wsib.on.ca](http://www.wsib.on.ca)

1-800-387-0750

### **Ministry of Labour**

[www.labour.gov.on.ca](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca)

1-877-202-0008

### **e-Laws**

This site provides access to official copies of Ontario's statutes and regulations.

<http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca>



#### WORKPLACE SAFETY & PREVENTION SERVICES

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) is a leader in providing impactful risk management solutions that drive lasting business success for our customers. WSPS offers unparalleled health & safety expertise, insight and solutions for creating healthy work environments where employees thrive and businesses prosper.

A dynamic \$43-million organization servicing 154,000 member firms, WSPS is primarily focused on the agricultural, industrial/manufacturing and service sectors. A key player in the Ontario occupational health & safety system, WSPS brings together community and business leaders to influence positive change to create a safer and more profitable Ontario.  
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