

▶ Workplace Inspections and Investigations

Workplace hazards are injuries, illnesses – and perhaps even deaths – waiting to happen. Identifying and investigating hazards are critical steps for preventing these tragic incidents from ever happening.

Successful workplace inspections and investigations follow recognized steps. The Workers Health & Safety Centre (WHSC) programs *Workplace Inspections* and *Workplace Investigations* show employers, supervisors, joint health and safety committee (JHSC) members, health and safety representatives and others the key steps, tools and resources needed to fulfill their responsibilities under Ontario's *Occupational Health & Safety Act*.

Workplace Inspections

▶ Duration 3.00 hours

Knowing what to look for and why is key when conducting workplace inspections. The WHSC's *Workplace Inspections* program provides this information and more.

Three-hours in length, the program focuses on the two objectives of workplace inspections: to identify new hazards or conditions that need to be addressed; and to check existing controls to ensure they are effective.

Through a discussion of the range of hazards found in workplaces, the program outlines a systematic approach to the identification of workplace hazards.

The *Workplace Inspections* program also covers the legal roles and responsibilities of all workplace parties with respect to workplace inspections, including the employer and supervisors who have the greatest legal responsibilities for ensuring the health and safety of workers.

Participants also learn the responsibilities of worker members of JHSCs and worker health and safety representatives in smaller workplaces to “identify situations that may be a source of danger or hazard to workers” and to “make recommendations for the improvement of the health and safety of workers.” To help accomplish this, a designated worker member of the JHSC or worker health and safety representative must carry out monthly inspections of the workplace.

Although each workplace is different, the steps involved in performing an inspection are the same. The WHSC program breaks the inspection cycle into five stages:

- Stage 1: Preparing for the inspection
- Stage 2: Conducting the inspection
- Stage 3: Writing the inspection report
- Stage 4: Reporting to the Joint Committee
- Stage 5: Following up.

Working together, participants examine each of the five stages through interactive group activities. The program also includes a case study and role play exercise allowing participants to practice their newly-acquired skills.

With their new skills and knowledge, participants return to the workplace with a knowledge of hazards and the practical processes, tools and resources that will enable them to conduct thorough workplace inspections.

Workplace Investigations

▶ Duration 3.00 hours

An accident investigation is performed first and foremost to find out the causes of a workplace injury or illness so action can be taken to prevent it from occurring again.

The WHSC's *Workplace Investigations* program prepares employers, supervisors, JHSC members, health and safety representatives to conduct investigations by revealing the traps an investigation can fall into and the steps a proper investigation must follow.

Three-hours in length, the program divides workplace investigations into two parts, 'accident' investigations and occupational illness/disease investigations. It begins by examining accident theory and their relationship to hazards. Using adult-centred learning techniques, participants quickly make the connection between workplace incidents, illnesses and diseases and workplace hazards.

They also learn how to conduct a step-by-step investigation which includes gathering and analyzing information; drawing conclusions; making recommendations and following up. Special emphasis is placed on the importance of collecting information on the symptoms experienced by the worker(s) who have contracted a work-related illness or disease to determine the cause of the disease; improve workplace health and safety; and to establish compensation for the victims or their survivors.

Also included in the program are resources and tools designed to aid in an investigation, including procedures for physical inspections, job hazard analysis, worker surveys, monitoring, evaluations and report writing.

Finally, a case study and role play provides the participants with the chance to practice their newly-acquired skills before heading back to the workplace and their job of securing safer, healthier work.

