

Recognizing Hazards in Your Workplace

Hazards must be managed in every workplace

Managing hazards is essential to preventing injuries and illnesses and contributes to healthy and productive workplaces. You should list and prioritize the hazards in your workplace, noting how they will be controlled or eliminated. We suggest you use the attached form, and reassess your hazards regularly.

If you need assistance, contact Health and Safety Ontario (healthandsafetyontario.ca).

What is a workplace hazard?

A hazard is a condition, practice or substance with the potential for causing loss, injury or harm to life, health or property. Hazards can be grouped in the following categories:

- Physical
- Chemical
- Biological
- Musculoskeletal disorder
- Psychosocial
- Safety

Identifying contributing factors

The following factors should be considered when recognizing hazards:

- People (training, coaching, communication, education, hygiene practices, etc)
- Equipment (protective equipment, repair and maintenance, adequate clearance)
- Materials (correct use, adequate supply, repair and maintenance, proper storage)
- Environment (noise, temperature, air quality, lighting, physical layout and structure, housekeeping)
- Process (work design, flow, reporting requirements, work practices policies and procedures)

Reviewing workplace information

Review the following workplace information to recognize hazards in your workplace. You may need to consult a health and safety expert where specialized expertise is needed.

- Worker comments, feedback, and reports of concerns
- Workplace inspection records
- Incident investigation reports

- Supervisors inspection reports and shift notes
- Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs)
- Hazard alerts or bulletins
- Regulations, technical standards and codes (e.g., building codes, fire codes)
- Industry best practices
- Manufacturer's instructions and specifications
- Established occupational exposure limits
- Human resources information such as absentee records and turnover rates

Prioritize hazards and begin working on the high priority ones first

For each hazard on your list, you should assess whether it is likely to harm workers and if it did harm workers, how serious could the injury be? Start working on the high priority hazards first.

Taking action

Ideally, controls should be designed so workers are not exposed to hazards. You should work through the hierarchy of controls starting with elimination and substitution. Remember controls like personal protective equipment only reduce exposure to the hazard not the hazard itself. Monitor for continuing effectiveness of controls and look for changes in the workplace that may require adjustments in the methods of controlling hazards. At the very least review all your hazards annually.

- Eliminate the hazard
- Substitute alternative materials, processes or equipment
- Use engineering controls to prevent access, limit exposure, or reduce energy available that may harm workers
- Increase awareness of hazards and controls through, for example, warning systems, alarms, and signs
- Use administrative controls such as training and procedures
- Use personal protective equipment

Hazard Recognition Form

What hazards can harm your workers?	Who can be harmed and how?	What priority should you give to each hazard? • <i>Is the hazard likely to cause injury or illness? "Y" or "N"</i> • <i>Can the hazard cause serious injury or illness? "Y" or "N"</i> 2 'yes' answers = high risk 1 'yes' & 1 'no' answer = medium risk 2 'no' answers = low risk	What action is needed to control or eliminate each hazard?	
				Date action to be taken by
DRIVING	Delivery Drivers - Collision	YES / YES = HIGH	TRAINING SCHEDULING MAINTENANCE	Jan 1 20XX

List all hazards in your workplace – you may require multiple sheets