

## Sample lesson plan to accompany fact sheet on staying safe and healthy at work

This tool provides advice to settlement services staff and workshop leaders on delivering the information in the fact sheet for learners entitled "Information for newcomers to Ontario about staying safe and healthy at work." The purpose of the fact sheet is to introduce newcomers to the occupational health and safety system in Ontario, including the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

### Use of the fact sheet is recommended for:

- all newcomers enrolled in English-language classes of LINC 4 or above;
- newcomers preparing to enter the labour market (e.g. in job-search and employment-preparation programs); and
- newly employed immigrants.

### Why introduce this topic

New workers (both newcomers and Canadian-born) face an increased risk of injury during their first month on the job, and more than 40 per cent of all workplace injuries happen during a worker's first six months on the job.

Newcomers or new immigrants face special challenges. Sometimes they are unable to find the work that they hoped to find when they first arrived in Ontario and, instead, take "survival jobs" that are not in their field. Research has shown that new immigrants to Canada are more likely to work in manual jobs where the risk of injury is higher.

### When to introduce this topic

This topic should be addressed when discussing labour market information, workers' rights and job quality.

### How to use this lesson plan

This lesson plan is designed for workshop leaders and settlement services staff who have little knowledge or background in this field and want guidance. The sample lesson plan provides wording that essentially mirrors the information in the fact sheet handed out to learners. It also suggests some classroom exercises.

The lesson plan ends with workshop leaders providing learners with information on "Helpful resources." Phone numbers and website information are provided as a convenience, but these do not have to be verbally provided during the session. Learners have this information in the fact sheet/handout.

## Introduction

Today, we are going to talk about health and safety at work. Workers get hurt on the job every day. Both you and your employer (boss) have a role in making your job safer. When you first come to Canada, you may not get a job in your field. You may end up doing a job you are not used to doing or using tools or machines that you have never used before.

## Exercise #1

Ask students if they have heard the term "workplace/occupational health and safety" before. If so, ask what they already know about the topic. Ask about workplace health and safety in their countries of origin, and about ways that they have been taught to work safely (or not) in other jobs, either in Canada or their countries of origin.

## About the Occupational Health and Safety Act

In Ontario, the law that protects people at work is called the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OH&S Act). The OH&S Act and its regulations help make workplaces safer, and give workers basic rights so that they can be safe at work.

## Who is covered by the Act

The OH&S Act covers workers in ALL workplaces in Ontario except those who work in the homes of their employers (i.e. domestic workers and live-in caregivers). Workplaces under federal government control, such as post offices, airports and banks, are protected by federal laws.

The Ministry of Labour makes sure that everyone follows the OH&S Act. It can inspect workplaces and order employers to make changes if there are problems.

## Duties of employers, supervisors and workers under the OH&S Act

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Employers, supervisors and workers each have their own specific duties in the workplace.

### Your employer or supervisor must:

- Give you the information, training and supervision that you need to protect your health and safety at work.
- Tell you about any dangers in the workplace, and take every reasonable precaution to protect you.

### Exercise #2

Ask the students for examples of things that might cause them to get sick or injured at work. Have the class 'brainstorm' ideas about common workplace hazards. Every job has different kinds of hazards associated with it, some, more obvious than others.

Examples include:

- knives/cutting materials (in restaurants or manufacturing) → cuts
- wet floors or debris → falling or slipping
- extreme temperatures (cold or hot) → aching muscles or fatigue
- toxic cleaning products or chemicals → illness or disease, both immediate and over time
- shift work → fatigue, sleeping difficulties
- repetitive movement → back, neck, arm, wrist pain
- unclean areas (particularly eating areas or restrooms) → illness from bacteria or viruses
- equipment and machinery → cuts, loss of limbs, death

Other health and safety risks for newcomers include: working quickly (accidents are more likely to happen when workers have to work rapidly); being tired (from working two jobs or doing shift work); feeling that the work is too easy (workers may not give enough attention to safety).

- Make sure that safe work procedures are in place and followed, and that tools, machinery and personal protective equipment are used properly.
- Ensure that safety equipment—both personal protective equipment and safety equipment on tools and machines—is in good condition.
- Cooperate and work with joint health and safety committees/representatives.

### As a worker, you must:

- Use the safety equipment—both personal protective equipment and safety equipment on tools and machines—that your employer says to use.
- Tell your employer if you see any broken equipment or spot any safety problems.
- Ensure you do not use any equipment or machinery that could harm you or another worker.
- Act responsibly in the workplace.
- Report any violations of the OH&S Act or its regulations to your employer.

## Your basic rights under the OH&S Act

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The OH&S Act gives workers three legal rights to help protect their health and safety on the job.

### 1. The right to know about

#### health and safety hazards on the job

Your employer must tell you about all known hazards in the workplace. This might include the types of work activities you do or the potentially harmful materials or chemicals you use.

### 2. The right to participate in

#### keeping your workplace safe and healthy

You have the right to help make your workplace safer by sharing your ideas or complaints about workplace health and safety with your employer or health and safety representative/committee. Every workplace in Ontario that employs more than five people (but fewer than 20) must have a health and safety representative. If a workplace employs 20 or more workers, it must have a joint health and safety committee.

Health and safety representatives and committees inspect the workplace for unsafe conditions and tell the employer and workers about these conditions. Representatives are workers appointed by other workers; at least half the members of most joint health and safety committees are workers chosen by other workers. You should find out who your health and safety representatives and/or committee members are when you are hired into a workplace.

### 3. The right to refuse work that you think is unsafe

You can legally refuse to do work that you think might hurt you or another worker. This includes when you think the equipment or machines you are using are unsafe or are being used in a way that might hurt you or someone else, or when you feel that the physical conditions of the workplace are dangerous. Your boss does not have the right to fire you for refusing unsafe work. However, there is a specific way to refuse work so that you are protected by the OH&S Act. See the Ministry of Labour website for details: [www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/ohsa/ohsag\\_7.php](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/ohsa/ohsag_7.php).

### Exercise #3

Ask the members of the class if they have ever done something at work that they believed was unsafe. Discuss with the class why it might be scary or intimidating to refuse unsafe work. Role-play with students about how they might refuse unsafe work.

## Violence and harassment in the workplace

Everyone should be able to work without fear of violence or harassment, in a safe and healthy workplace. Violence and harassment in the workplace are not tolerated in Ontario.

- **Workplace violence** is when someone uses, attempts to use or threatens to use physical force that could cause injury to a worker in a workplace.

Accidents, such as when a worker trips over something and inadvertently pushes a co-worker, are not usually considered violence.

- **Workplace harassment** is when someone engages in distressing and unwelcome comments or conduct against a worker in a workplace. This may include bullying, intimidating, making offensive jokes or innuendos, displaying or circulating offensive pictures or materials, or making offensive or intimidating phone calls.

Actions by an employer or supervisor that are part of normal work activities are not usually considered harassment. This is the case even if the actions result in unpleasant consequences for a worker. Examples of activities that would not normally be considered workplace harassment include work assignments, scheduling, job assessments, performance evaluations, workplace inspections, implementation of dress codes and disciplinary action.

- Generally, differences of opinion and minor disagreements between co-workers would not be considered harassment.

All workplaces must have policies or programs to prevent violence and harassment. Your employer must tell you about these prevention policies and programs. This includes telling you about the process for reporting incidents of workplace violence and harassment, and how your employer will investigate and deal with incidents or complaints.

If you are facing violence or harassment at work, you should inform your employer, supervisor, health and safety representative or joint health and safety committee. If the problem cannot be solved internally (within your workplace), then you should call the Ministry of Labour. See the back page of this handout for contact information.

If you are in immediate danger or an emergency situation, you should contact the police.

For more information, including what is considered workplace violence or harassment under the OH&S Act, see: [www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/topics/workplaceviolence.php](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/topics/workplaceviolence.php).

## Other important information

Tell your supervisor if you do not understand health and safety instructions or safety rules. If you cannot read rules and instructions on your own, have someone translate them for you. Ask your supervisor or co-workers for help if you are new to the job.

If your employer tries to punish you in any way for refusing work that you feel is unsafe—for example, by cutting your hours or firing you—then you can report this to the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry can help, but note that these complaints can sometimes take considerable time to resolve.

All injuries at work should be reported to a supervisor. In Ontario, reporting injuries is the law. See the fact sheet about workers' compensation for more information.

## Helpful resources

You should be aware of a number of organizations that address health and safety in the workplace. For example:

The **Ontario Ministry of Labour or Ministry of Labour Health and Safety Contact Centre** is the government body to contact to report unsafe work practices, injuries or incidents, or if you have general occupational health and safety questions.

This document does not constitute legal advice or formal training. To determine rights and obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA), contact legal counsel or refer to the legislation at: [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_90o01\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90o01_e.htm)

This document is part of the *Prevention is the Best Medicine* toolkit created by a research team at the Institute for Work & Health. The team included Agnieszka Kosny, Peter Smith, Curtis Breslin, Ron Saunders and Marni Lifshen, in partnership with:

- Injured Workers' Consultants
- Skills for Change
- Workers Health and Safety Centre
- Workplace Safety and Insurance Board
- Ontario Ministry of Labour
- Workplace Safety and Prevention Services
- Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers

You can call 24 hours a day/7 days a week. Call 1-877-202-0008 or visit the website at: [www.labour.gov.on.ca](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca).

The **Ontario Labour Relations Board** offers legal help if you are being punished for exercising your rights under the OH&S Act. It is also the body to contact for appealing a Ministry of Labour inspection order. Call 416-326-7500 in Toronto or 1-877-339-3335 toll-free, or visit the website at: [www.olrb.gov.on.ca/english/homepage.htm](http://www.olrb.gov.on.ca/english/homepage.htm).

**Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW)** has ergonomists, occupational hygienists, nurses and doctors who provide occupational health services, information and medical diagnoses for work-related injuries and diseases. Call 416-449-0009 in Toronto or 1-877-817-0336 toll-free, or visit the website at: [www.ohcow.on.ca](http://www.ohcow.on.ca).

The **Industrial Accident Victims' Group of Ontario (IAVGO)** is a community legal aid clinic serving injured workers in Ontario. It can offer free legal advice, legal representation and information. Call 416-924-6477 or 1-800-230-6311 toll-free, or visit the website at: [www.iavgo.org](http://www.iavgo.org).

The **Toronto Workers' Health & Safety Legal Clinic** can offer help if you are being punished at work for refusing unsafe work. Call 416-971-8832 in Toronto, or go to the website at: [www.workers-safety.ca](http://www.workers-safety.ca).



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