

Workplace Health and Safety Bulletin



Ten Questions to Ask Your Employer

If you're thinking about working for a particular employer, getting ready for a job interview, or about to start a new job, ask these questions. Work isn't just about benefits, holidays and getting paid. Find out about how serious the employer will be about your safety. Here are ten questions you should ask, as well as the kind of answers you should expect to hear.

(1) What are the dangers of my job?

Your new employer is required by law to tell you about any hazards at the workplace that they know about. This included such things as exposure to chemicals, situations in which you have to work at a height, or work activities around potentially dangerous equipment.

If you don't know what the hazards or dangers are, how can you take steps to protect yourself?

(2) Are there any other hazards (noise, radiation, chemicals) that I should know about?

In addition to obvious workplace hazards like falling from heights or unguarded machinery, the effects of some hazards take time to show up. Repeated exposures to high noise levels can cause hearing loss. Working repeatedly over a period of time with radiation, dusts, and chemicals may increase your risk of diseases such as cancer.

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Your employer is required by law to share this information with you and to tell you how to work safely with these materials. The law may also require that protective safety equipment be used.

(3) Will I receive job safety training? When?

Alberta's *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation* requires your new employer to make sure you have the skills to safely do the work you're assigned. If you're still learning those skills and aren't quite "competent", then the law requires that you be under the direct supervision of someone who has those skills. If you're learning how to unload chemicals from a tanker truck and your skilled partner is called away for some reason, stop everything until they come back if you don't know exactly what to do. Sure it's easy to finish the job on your own. And most times everything will go well. But stop everything this time, and learn all the skills you need to do the job properly, and maybe the next time you can finish the job on your own.

Making sure you have the skills to safely do the work you're assigned means getting trained. In certain cases training must be provided before you begin work. If you'll be working with hazardous chemicals, you must first receive Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) Training. If you'll be working with asbestos, you may also need to take a government-approved course.

If you've been asked to do something that may endanger you or your co-workers and have not been given adequate training or supervision, the law requires you to refuse to do that work. The *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, the law that requires you to refuse that work, also protects you from disciplinary action by your employer.

(4) Do you have safety meetings?

Although the law doesn't require most workplaces to have regular safety meetings, the fact that your employer has them is a good indication of their commitment to safety.

- (5) Is there any safety equipment I'll be expected to wear? Will I receive training in how to use it? When?

The law requires your employer to make sure that you use appropriate safety equipment when and where it's necessary. Your employer is also required to make sure that you're trained in how to use this equipment properly.

The law requires employers to provide respiratory protective equipment where there is a breathing hazard and hearing protection where noise limits set by law are exceeded. Employers are not required by law to provide items such as safety boots, protective eyewear, hard hats and fire resistant clothing. However, if such equipment is necessary, your employer is responsible for making sure that you use it. One of the ways your employer can do this is to ask you to bring your own as a condition of employment. Ask if you're not sure.

- (6) Will I be trained in emergency procedures (fire, chemical spill)? When?

The law requires your employer to make sure that you're either competent – have the skills – to work safely or are under the direct supervision of someone who is competent. If you're not under the direct supervision of a competent person, your employer must tell you the emergency procedures before you start work.

WHMIS training is required *before* you begin working with any hazardous materials. WHMIS training must also include what to do in case of an emergency.

- (7) Where are fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and other emergency equipment located?

The law requires your employer to control the hazards at your workplace. This includes providing fire extinguishers and specialized equipment required to control the hazards that may arise during emergencies.

At a minimum, all workplaces must have a first aid kit. The type of kit depends on the number of workers, how hazardous the work is, and the location of the workplace. Most workplaces are required to have individuals present who are trained in providing first aid.

(8) What do I do if I get hurt? Who is the first aid person?

The law requires your employer to provide first aid equipment and services at your workplace. This means that the right type of first aid kit must be on-site and an appropriate number of individuals must be trained in first aid and available at all times. Find out who the first aiders are in case you ever need their help. If you do get injured and require first aid, you are required by law to report the injury to your employer as soon as possible.

(9) What are my health and safety responsibilities?

The law required you to take reasonable care to protect the health and safety of you and your co-workers. This includes cooperating with your employer by following the employer's safety rules and taking required safety training.


Remember that if you've been asked to do something that may endanger you or your co-workers, and have not been given adequate training or supervision, the law requires you to refuse to do that work.

(10) Who do I ask if I have a health and safety question?

The first person to ask should always be your employer, usually a supervisor, since they know your workplace best. However, you can contact the Workplace Health and Safety Contact Centre, by dialing toll free 1-866-415-8690 and talk with one of our staff, or reach us on the Internet at www.worksafely.org All calls are kept confidential.

If you are experiencing a serious problem, one of our Occupational Health and Safety Officers can drop by the workplace and check things out. All questions and complaints are kept confidential.

For more information

 http://www.qp.alberta.ca/574.cfm?page=O02.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncln=0779749200

Occupational Health and Safety Act

 http://www.qp.alberta.ca/574.cfm?page=2003_062.cfm&leg_type=Regs&isbncln=077971752X

Occupational Health and Safety Regulation

 http://employment.alberta.ca/documents/WHS/WHS-LEG_ohsc_2009.pdf


Occupational Health and Safety Code


 <http://employment.alberta.ca/SFW/3969.html>

Occupational Health and Safety Code Explanation Guide

Contact us:

Province-Wide Contact Centre

 Edmonton & surrounding area:
780-415-8690

 Throughout Alberta:
1-866-415-8690



Deaf or hearing impaired

- In Edmonton: **780-427-9999**

or

- **1-800-232-7215** throughout Alberta

Web Site



www.worksafely.org

Getting copies of OHS Act, Regulation & Code:

Queen's Printer



www.qp.gov.ab.ca



Edmonton 780-427-4952

Workplace Health and Safety



<http://employment.alberta.ca/whs-ohs>

Call any Government of Alberta office toll-free
Dial 310-0000, then the area code and telephone number you want to reach

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