



Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S)

All workers have:

- The right to know the safety hazards at work – the precautions needed to reduce or eliminate the hazards – all safety training
- The right to participate in the day to day detection, evaluation and reduction of workplace hazards – on your committee, as elected by your peers or appointed by your trade union
- The right to refuse unsafe or unusually dangerous work without fear of repercussions

Did you know?

- Every work site is required to have an Occupational Health Committee (OHC) – (or an Occupational Health and Safety Representative in sites with 10 or less Employees) - as well as a system of reporting accidents, injuries, and near misses
- The OHC is the process for the Employer and Employees to work together to resolve health and safety concerns
- Committee members may access five days of education leave each year for occupational health and safety training as per Section 46 of the *Occupational Health And Safety Regulations*. Time spent at training courses must be treated as paid work time. All OH&S committee members should complete Occupational Health Committee (OHC) Level 1 training sessions from the Saskatchewan Association for Safe Workplaces in Health (SASWH). To see the upcoming training schedules, visit <https://www.saswh.ca/index.php/training-schedule>
- *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* requires Employers to set up and maintain committees. An OHC must have between 2-12 members and at least half must be in scope staff
- If you do not know who represents you on your OHC, please ask your Unit Chair or Supervisor
- The process of becoming a member on your Unit's OHC includes two steps:
 1. Contact your Unit Chair or call the SEIU-West Member Resource Centre (MRC) at 1.888.999.7348 and;
 2. Put your name forward during Unit election meetings, the timing of which to be determined by the Unit Executive and Union Representative – if elected, your position will be added to the OHC;
 3. Your SEIU-West Staff Rep will email the Employer and cc new OHC members informing them of the person(s) elected;
 4. If an Employer identifies interested OHC members, ask that they inform the Staff Rep to ensure an election is held.



Occupational Health Committee (OHC) Roles & Responsibilities

“An OHC works with employers and workers to create a healthy and safe work environment by detecting Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) hazards and developing practical approaches to eliminate or control those hazards. OHCs are essential for bringing health and safety concerns into the open, focusing attention on them, and recommending ways to correct and resolve them.” – Government of Saskatchewan

Duties of OHC:

- Help employers identify, eliminate, or control hazards;
- Make recommendations to the employer for improving workplace health and safety
- Talk with workers about health and safety concerns and helping resolve the concerns
- Receive and distribute OH&S information
- Inspect the workplace regularly
- Investigate reportable incidents (meaning accidents and dangerous occurrences)
- Help establish and promote health and safety programs, policies, and training
- Investigate refusals to work
- Help employers comply with OHS legislation

When working with an OHC, employers are required to:

- Consult and co-operate with the OHC
- Respond to concerns or recommendations raised by the OHC
- Inform the OHC or OHS representative, in writing, of the action(s) they have or will take to correct the hazard(s) or, if the employer has not corrected the hazard(s), the reasons for not taking action

Rules for the OHC:

- Employers select the management members; they cannot out-number the worker members
- Employers are not able to appoint, elect or fill any employee seats on the OHC - it is our union's responsibility
- An OHC should have balanced representation of workers. For example, a hospital's committee might include a Food Services Worker, a CCA, a LPN and a Security Officer
- Each committee must have **two** co-chairs, employers select one and workers select the other. Co-chairs are selected at the first meeting. Co-chairs have the same rights and responsibilities as other members, including the right to call and chair meetings
- Members serve a three-year term and can serve more than one term. It is best to ensure that the OHC has a balanced number of experienced and new members at all times
- There must be a quorum at every committee meeting. A quorum means half of all the OHC members must be present and half of all OHC members present must be non-management, and at least one management member must be present
- Employers and workers should select “alternate” OHC members to ensure that there is a quorum at every OHC meeting