

Alberta OHS Code – Part 2: Hazard Assessment Elimination and Control



A L E R T S



United Nurses of Alberta

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Part 2 of the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Code requires employers to perform hazard assessments in their workplace(s). It also specifies the methods the employer must implement in order to eliminate or control the workplace hazards identified in the assessment process. Part 14: Lifting and Handling Loads and Part 27: Violence also requires specific hazard assessments regarding these two workplace hazards. UNA local occupational health and safety representatives should be familiar with the requirements under the OHS Code in order to insure that their employer is in compliance with the Code. New language in Article 34: Occupational Health and Safety requires some employers to provide copies of hazard assessments to OH&S committees.

The Hazard Assessment Process:

Employers are required to assess a work site and identify existing or potential hazard before work begins. There are two important phrases used in this section.

The reference to “before work begins” requires employers to identify and then eliminate or control hazards when designing or building new worksites, renovating old worksites, introducing new work processes, and changing current work processes.

The requirement to identify “potential hazards” means that a hazard does not have to have resulted in workplace injury or illness in order to be considered a workplace hazard.

The assessment must be thorough and identify hazards often grouped into four categories:

1. Physical Hazards

- lifting and handling loads (patients)
- repetitive motions
- slipping and tripping
- fire
- electricity
- noise
- lighting
- temperatures
- radiation
- violence

2. Chemical Hazards

- disinfectants
- asbestos
- solvents
- anesthetic gases
- chemotherapy
- scents
- latex

3. Biological Hazards

- virus, fungi, bacteria
- parasites
- mould
- blood and body fluids

4. Psychological Hazards

- workload
- staffing levels
- management styles
- shiftwork
- abuse, harassment and bullying
- lack of control over work

The employer must produce a written hazard assessment report that includes the results of the hazard assessment and the methods used to eliminate or control the hazards identified. The assessment report must be available to workers at the worksite (sec. 8 OHS regulation).

Worker Participation Required!

When performing a hazard assessment in a work site or work area your employer is required to involve workers in that work site or area in the assessment process. Workers should have meaningful involvement. All affected workers should have the opportunity to provide input when identifying workplace hazards and determining appropriate control methods.

Hazard Elimination and Control

This section of the Code sets out a hierarchy of control methods that employers must follow. The control method should attack the source of the hazard not its outward signs (e.g. noise, fumes, dust) it produces.

Whenever possible, hazards should be eliminated or controlled at their source (as close to where the problem is created as possible). If these options are not possible then the hazard should be controlled before the hazard reaches the worker (along the path between the source and the worker). Administrative controls (policy and procedures) and personal protective equipment (PPE) are the least effective control methods.

If eliminating the hazard is not possible then engineering controls are the next option for the employer. Safety engineered sharps devices and mechanical patient lift devices are good examples of engineering controls.